REPTON

BY LIEUT: COL: F. KANE

00072075

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 20 February, 2020

REPTON

REPTON

By LIEUT.-COLONEL F. KANE

72073

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY ALBEMARLE STREET W
1911

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD., PRINTERS,
LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

CONTENTS

CHAP		PAGE
I.	EARLY LIFE	1
II.	ST. OMER	23
III.	PARIS	35
IV.	THE SODALITY	69
V.	BROMLEY CHASE	87
VI.	THE PROVINCIAL'S LETTER	105
VII.	A MORNING ON THE RIVER	123
VIII.	THE EMPTY HOUSE	142
IX.	IN DEFENCE OF THE COMPANY OF JESUS	169
X.	LONDON	196
XI.	MALBROUCK S'EN VA-T-EN GUERRE	219
XII.	MALPLAQUET	237
XIII.	JAMES III. LACKING THE GRACE OF GOD	255
XIV.	WITH THE PRINCE EUGÉNE	275
XV.	THE SIEGE OF DOUAY	290
XVI.	EXCOMMUNICATION	311

REPTON

CHAPTER I

EARLY LIFE

THE beginning of this discourse is my desire to set forth the true history of the strange chances that befell me during the first years which followed my arrival at an age of intelligence. I feel in a manner compelled to make this relation for the guidance of those who may hereafter bear my name; since it has come to my hearing from divers sources that certain of the occasions of which I would write have become the subject of some public talk, and that men ignorant of the facts have judged them from hearsay, aye, and judged them harshly too. For indeed, without a full knowledge, it were easy to condemn the part I played, even if impartiality could wholly approve my deeds when all the truth is known, which I am not bold to assert.

And yet I would not be understood to be on my defence to posterity, seeing I have but small shame of those very events of the past that have been misrepresented with so much malice. Rather would I seek a middle course, if such there be, between that of appellant and respondent at the bar of its judgment, in order to a fair understanding of the cause and a verdict unaffected by bias according to the

evidence. To this end, if you will bear with me, I shall try to confine my account to those happenings that took place under my own observation as far as possible; and where it may be needful to introduce other matter for the better comprehension of these occurrences, I shall be careful to rely only on the testimony of those whom I have proved. If I shall strive not to cloak my own stupidity, indiscretion and wickedness (a task of no mean compass, I assure you), I am inclined to the conjecture that you will the more readily credit those parts of the history wherein some censure is laid on others, and that you will weigh with care the balance between me and my detractors.

I was born in the year 1688 in the house of my father, Stephen Repton, which stands about five furlongs from the village of Felton in the county of Salop; and in the month of October in that same year I was baptised in the faith of the Church of England at the parish church of St. Michael and All Angels—though many years were to pass before the last-named fact was brought to my knowledge with insistence.

I have hardly remembrance of a mother's love, for mine died when I was but three years of age, while my father followed her, of a broken heart it was said, the second summer after he had buried her. Albeit I have no clear mind of any words my mother said, my fancy pictured, on still nights when I found myself alone in darkened house or chamber, a figure softly moving, and a face of rare dark beauty which, I was told, were hers. The figure held a shaded light which revealed the face enough to show that the smile upon it was for me.

Not long before her death she, or her confessor, converted my father to her own faith which was the Roman Catholic; for she came of the Coleman family, who were of much repute and in high esteem among the Company of Jesus.

I have heard it said that converts are more jealous for their adopted faith than those who have been born and bred in the same: and it is certain that my father embraced the tenets of his last years with a zeal and fervour, inspired, it may be, in part by the memory of his lost wife, which would seem to have sought occasions for self-sacrifice. Indeed, the fact of his conversion alone was a sacrifice to warrant his unselfish devotion, since you are to consider that, though I have not the precise date of the event, it must have happened after the revolution; and at a time when the persecution of the Catholics, suspended during the reign of James II., was recommenced with much bitterness.

It is true (and I say it with some sorrow, albeit I have neither the knowledge nor the desire to judge him) that my father concealed his change of faith under the advice of Fr. Cornish, and continued to attend the parish church of St. Michael and All Angels until a short time before his death. But, clandestine though they were, the repeated visits of Fr. Cornish to our house, after my mother's death had robbed them of their pretext, would in the course of time have disclosed the secret to the inquisitive, even if my father had wished to continue the deception. And I have good cause to think that he was only concerned to hide his new faith in so far as it should pleasure the Roman church to hold the deception to be

needful. For in the preamble to his last testament, which is writ in his own hand, I found the words: "I hereby acquaint all men, if it shall not have pleased his Holiness, through Fr. Cornish, S.J., to make known the fact earlier, that I die in the profession of the Roman Catholic faith."

My father's kinsfolk, however, either by reason of his marriage or from suspicion that he was abjuring the faith of his forefathers, would seem to have shunned intercourse with him at his last days: and scarce aught in writing from any of them was found among his papers by the lawyer who had charge of them until I should come to years of discretion. None attended the funeral save old Dick Repton, the master of the flour mills at Gresford and Holt that were founded by my grandfather. Dick Repton, when a lad, had fought at Naseby on the King's side with my grandfather, who was his uncle. But I have no knowledge how he came to possess the mills whereby my grandfather saved the money to purchase the small estate my father inherited from him at Felton. It may have been that his unwont to business caused my father in early life, for a consideration, to break that connection with the source of his fortune for which he had no longer need.

Dick Repton left our house on the morrow of the funeral, leaving me in the care of Fr. Cornish according to the will, and I never saw him again before his death some five years later. I have since heard that he was not well pleased with the provisions of my father's will, of which you are to hear more later and which had been made known to him before he quitted the house.

I design to be as brief as possible in the relation of facts of which I have but a dim remembrance and for the exactness of which I am in debt to others. So I will ask you to conceive me now removed to a house in Northumberland, where I lived for many years as a member of a Catholic family named Oswald, to whom I was no way kin and who were, I later learned, recompensed by Fr. Cornish for my board and lodging, together with the instruction I shared with the children of the family.

How shall I speak of Carlton House? Its memory is very dear to me. Perhaps the simplest words are the best. It was to me a home in all respects while I dwelt there, and both Mr. Oswald and his wife treated me with infinite kindness and good will, insomuch that I grew to look up to them as a child to his parents. And I have much to thank them for and to remember them by. They tried to teach me (even if I failed to learn) that religion is not of necessity a taskmaster to be dreaded, but rather a companion for our leisure, who thus is not completely forgot in our busy moments. From them I learned the love of nature that has never left me: the passion, I might say, to which I have never been unfaithful, and which has often filled the void of solitude without sensible loss on my part.

Mr. Oswald was much given to field sports in which he greatly excelled, and he encouraged and even exhorted his children to cultivate them in their leisure, since he held that it kept them out of mischief, and that the discipline of the body needful to success in sport was good for the soul.

With the other children I was taught to ride before

I was eight years old, and he was not content to see us sit on horseback. He was at particular pains to satisfy himself that we understood the management of the horse's head without affliction to the beast, by making us passage to and fro before him in the pasture field before the house, of mornings when he took us with him a'hunting, and on such afternoons as we returned early from the chase by reason of a blank day.

Mr. Oswald was a man who lives in the picture gallery of my memory as the type of those who are content to be in that state of life to which it has pleased God to call them. The picture frame is meanly adorned, the better to attract the eyes to the portrait within. And though I have now but a poor remembrance of his appearance, save as a bold horseman, his character and upright example are always fresh in my mind, and they stand out the more clear that time gives me discretion to appraise them. He enjoyed the good things of life, and was wishful that others should share his enjoyment; but excess in anything he abhorred, which was perhaps one of the secrets of his singular hold on the intelligence of men and beasts.

Children have the habit of accepting the conditions of life around them without question, and are wont to think that as their awakening intelligence finds matters, so they have always been. And I know not what the temper of the country-side about Carlton House may have been in the past touching those who held the Catholic faith. But during my sojourn in the place there happened little to disclose to the mind of a child that our religion was an offence to

any in authority. The house, which was an old one, had a small chapel within the main building wherein mass was celebrated whensoever a priest was present. And this occurred with enough of regularity to hinder the kindling of any curiosity of mine on the subject.

It is true that the priests used to come and go mostly in the early morning or at night; but neither this fact, nor the frequent tarrying of a father for many days within the walls of the house, awoke surprise in children who were long accustomed to such events.

Neither would it enter our minds to ask why Mr. Oswald was not on the Commission of Peace if we were privy to the fact that he was not, which I doubt. He seemed in favour with all the neighbours, whether Catholic or Protestant, and lacked not frequent guests at his hospitable board.

You are to bear in mind that I speak now of Northumberland; and it may have been (as I have since heard it was) that the Catholics of the North were more favoured than those in other parts of the country where persecution was kept alive as much by self interest as by fanaticism.

You may suppose that Fr. Cornish did not neglect to pay us visits as his busy life spared occasion: and whether unconsciously to myself he linked me with an earlier love in the past or whether it was the true worth of the man himself, the more I saw him the more I learned to love him. He would come to Carlton riding a stout palfrey or pad which had a gait much swifter than an amble, yet smoother than the trot—a kind of run—which the beast could

maintain for many hours, making journeys of fifty to sixty miles in a long night. And I can see him now in fancy, as I have watched him more than once from my chamber window, riding into the courtyard at Carlton House as the first yellow light of early dawn disclosed the eastern horizon.

He would always find time at these visits to hold some private conversation with me and enquire into the progress I had made in religious exercises. But his questionings were so put that they never galled the youthful spirit of independence which, I fear, I even then displayed.

As time went on, my affection for him notwithstanding, there began to grow in me a fear, inspired perhaps by some stray or intended words of the father, lest through his means a period to my happy life at Carlton was approaching. And so it came to pass. For when I was little more than past my thirteenth year I had to prepare for the step that was to sever my connection with this attractive household and lead me to the course of training which shaped my life till manhood.

One evening of spring when the setting sun, through the narrow windows before us, threw the broad shadows of the mullions on the wall at our backs, my host and hostess came in while we children were at supper to tell us Fr. Cornish was to come next day. And as they left the room Mr. Oswald touched me on the shoulder and said he would have a few words with me in the library when the meal should be ended.

They seemed to be disputing (for both were in the library when I entered) on a matter wherein I was

concerned, and I heard Mrs. Oswald say: "Bear in mind, James, that if you say or do aught which may dissuade the child it will be imputed to you by all the faithful for selfish interest."

To which her husband replied: "Yes, and I could bear that, too, if I but knew what is my duty in this strange matter. Was the man mad, think you?" Then turning to me with a gentleness strange even to me who had always found him kind, "Cousin Charles," said he, for that was the way I was called in the family, "have you ever given a thought to the profession you will follow when you become a man? Nay: I must begin at the beginning. Did you ever know that your father had chosen a profession for you?"

I was so much astonished at the questions that I think I was slow to answer him and say I knew nothing of my father's wishes, and had not myself considered of the matter of a profession.

"It is all the harder, then, for me to tell you," says he, "that Fr. Cornish comes to-morrow to bid you make choice of one and, what I fear will tend to rob you of some freedom in the matter, he will tell you that it was your father's wish that you should be a priest and enter the Society of Jesus."

Here was a thunderbolt in good truth; but in place of inspiring me with the strange awe that such an announcement might be expected to awake in a good boy, the first shock caused my spirit to rise in unintelligible revolt. I know not what I said when Mrs. Oswald, rising from her chair, made across the room and folded me in her arms: "My boy, my boy," said she, "God will give you strength to bear

this burthen and may he guide you in your choice. It is not for you, without His help, to know the proper course, nor for us to give you counsel, by reason of matters that you cannot now comprehend. But Fr. Cornish will help make your way clear to you, for he is one of God's saints and loves you above all earthly things. The world is full of pain for us all, and you, too, must needs bear your share; while if it comes early to your young life, and you can put a brave face to it, be sure you will have your reward."

With such comforting did the kind heart of this lady strive to break the force of the blow, the while Mr. Oswald looked through the casement into the gathering darkness without. And I question whether his silence was not more soothing to my disturbed thoughts than the gentle ministrations of his wife; but of that I cannot now be sure.

I went to bed with a heavy heart, and it is not to be supposed that I got much sleep, for I was in rebellious humour. It may not be said that I had ever given a thought to a profession save in jest, perhaps, when Cyril Oswald, who was next me in age, and I would sometimes tell the others how we designed to become soldiers—it was always horse soldiers—and fight for King James over the water. And I think my only other thoughts for the future had been those that came to me, as I said, by reason of the growing sense of coming separation with which the later visits of Fr. Cornish were beginning to animate me. So that the suddenness of the news I got from Mr. Oswald set my young brain in a senseless whirl. I should deceive you if I said that

I entertained a dislike for the priest's office, seeing that I had hardly considered of the matter, and indeed I think I was not without some inward pride that I should be held worthy of such a high calling. But I must have resented the manner in which the calling came to me. There seemed to lie a weight of humiliation on my vanity in the reflection that my parent's wishes had been so long withheld from me. And this, I must think, it was that made me rebellious.

But the morrow unfolded the cause of my long ignorance. And when Fr. Cornish showed me that his silence had been due to his desire to observe faithfully my father's injunctions not to press my choice by speaking of his wishes too soon, I felt shame of my unruliness of the past night.

As the father enlarged on his plans, I was disposed to consider them not wholly unfavourably in the light of the flattering importance to a boy of any serious discussion of his own affairs in life. The fact was the man spoke with a magic of honesty that few could resist; and near every word he uttered seemed to bear witness to the purity of his mind and the rare integrity of his purposes. That in the course of his activity on behalf of the Company of Jesus he had sometimes to do things repugnant to his high character, I have now no doubt: nay, I think I have his words in proof of it. But such acts must have been, in his mind, merely hallowed sacrifices at the altar of blind obedience.

"You must tell me, Charles," says he, after we had had some talk alone, "all that is in your mind, all your objections and scruples, and what you truly think of this plan. I will try to make straight what

I can; but I will be no party to spoiling your life, and the first decision is not of necessity the last."

"My father made the plan for me before I knew how to think for myself," said I. "Is it not for you who knew his will to guide me now?"

"Yes, but therein lies my trouble," said he. "If I am to guide you, I much misdoubt my impartiality as an advocate, inasmuch as my hope is (you see I am open with you) to see you partake the infinite happiness I myself enjoy, which I would not exchange for the throne of England, nor have you miss if you have the right call. And yet my own happiness does not hinder me from seeing that one unsuited to the holy office, who should be impelled thereto by a sense of duty, might suffer an equal misery. I am torn asunder, Charles, betwixt my fears lest you lose that which is greater than wealth and position, or fail in a task for which you may prove unequal."

"Then," said I, "you, who have had the experience, can tell me if I am suited to the work."

"No man can tell that, my son," said he. "It is not given to us to know beforehand the secret which the Lord will not reveal until he who would be in His service makes trial of it. But I doubt not that if you undertake the work with all your soul, your service will be acceptable to Him."

Such was the manner of the arguments with which the good father sought to reassure me: and in order that more time should be allowed for the calm contemplation of the projected step, it was arranged by him, with the approval of Mr. Oswald and his wife, that I should remain another year at Carlton House before I made up my mind for good. But as time

went on I could perceive that, of the three, Mr. Oswald was alone in not secretly hoping that I should join the priesthood, and though I was thankful for the respite, as boys will be in like case, I knew I should have little support save in following my father's wishes.

Thus it came to be understood when Fr. Cornish took his leave that, unless I should raise one in the meanwhile, there would be no obstacle to my going to the College of St. Omer in France at the end of the year. No change was made in our life during that year, except perhaps that Mr. Oswald took me oftener a'hunting, alone with him on occasions, and I rid much with him on his economies about the estate.

When the year came to an end I could give no good reason for going counter to my father's wishes or those of Fr. Cornish who, with all his struggle to preserve to me an open mind, had yet not subtlety enough to conceal from me entirely his secret hope that I should follow his calling.

But you are not to suppose that in yielding my will I renounced or even affected another manner of life or did penance to my serious inclinations. I could think of no alternative, and none was offered to my consideration. I was entirely ignorant of my worldly prospects, save that I had been told I was to inherit at some future time (remote enough it seemed to me then) my father's estate at Felton, which was being administered by one George Goldbetter, attorney of Oswestry. But the extent of my fortune (whether of set purpose I know not) was left to my callow imagination.

In sum, I liked not wholly the prospect opened out to me, and yet disliked it so little that I saw in my heart no hindrance to the dutiful fulfilment of my parent's wishes. And this, I take it, has been the case with many a youth before me, and will be the lot of many that come after me.

Though fond of country life, it is not to be thought that I was by any means a dunce. I liked my studies, and I had so little difficulty with them that I earned the character of a serious lad among the young folk at Carlton House, for all I was a match for them at riding and play. Childrenlike, though we spoke of the coming separation, we felt no pains of anticipation, and when the time came to bid each other good-bye, we were all stricken down as from a blow unforeseen.

Fr. Cornish came on the appointed day, bearing with him a letter from George Goldbetter. It was the first I had ever received, and a proud lad was I and not a little puffed up when he bid me break the seal, and read it for myself. The letter set forth that the writer was my obedient servant, and that he had matter of moment to my concerns the which he would be grateful for an occasion to discuss with me when I should be on my journey from the North. And to this end he bid me welcome to his house to tarry with my companion so long as it should be convenient to both of us. The letter was just such an one as a gentleman may often get from his man of affairs; but it was all new to me, and helped to distract my thoughts from the coming departure.

Fr. Cornish was to bear me company to France,

and introduce me to the College at St. Omer : and he agreed that it was proper I should see Goldbetter and learn my affairs, with which object we were to make our journey to the south coast by way of Oswestry.

Early in March, 1702, we set out on horseback with our mails behind us, and I had a sore parting from Mrs. Oswald and the younger children at the house. But Mr. Oswald and Cyril rid with us by Chollerton through the Roman wall, across the Tyne at Corbridge, and set us as far as Allendale, whence our purpose was to reach Penrith, and there lie the night.

Before they turned their horses homeward, Mr. Oswald drew me away from the rest, and "I cannot tell you, Cousin Charles," says he, "what this parting is to me. I had as lief lose son of my own, for indeed you have been son to me. But I bid you remember that ye shall never lack a friend nor a home so long as I live and durst call Carlton mine."

I could ill reply to his kind words since my heart throbbed too fast to permit much speech; but "I have been very happy with you, sir," said I, "and I shall never forget your kindness to me."

"For that, you have naught to thank me lad," said he. "You were bound to have the kindness. But you have left a void place in all our hearts that we shall never fill. I have tried to do the best for ye, according to my lights, though, maybe, if I had known what was coming, I might have gone another way. But at least ye have learned fair play to man and beast, and that is a lesson of God's own teaching. Farewell, my boy."

I was not ill-pleased when Fr. Cornish was at length alone with me; for though my heart was nigh to bursting, I knew the end must come soon, and therefore, to my mind, all this play of youthful emotions was but extending the sorrow to no purpose. It seemed likewise to ill-befit my new character of a young man beginning life with a horse and mails of his own. I had tried to pass it off lightly with Cyril, and held out my hand abruptly at the end; but he would have none of it and, dropping the rein on his horse's neck, he seized me with both arms, while each fairly sobbed on the other's shoulder.

The new excitement of changing scenery, as the road we followed led us now over the wild desolate moorland where the heath cocks were mating, and again into grass valleys checkered with homesteads and villages plain to be seen in the sunlight through trees that had yet their winter dress, soon dried my tears. And I have since observed that the distractions of travel often blunt my sorrow at parting; so that it is not till the journey's end that the full measure of my grief is poured out, and I reckon up the loss I have suffered in friends left behind.

From Penrith we rid to Lancaster, whence a long day brought us to Chester, where we got news of the death of William III., and about noon of the fourth day found us entering Oswestry.

Mr. George Goldbetter was a bachelor who occupied a house larger than his requirements, and his style of living was somewhat above the ordinary of an attorney. He was learned in his profession, and noted for his extreme care of the interests and occasions of his clients, which were to him as his

own. His manners might be called distinguished, and he affected, but without excess, the pleasures of the table. He reminded me, as he welcomed us, that I had visited his house before in company of my father; but of this I had no remembrance. His bearing towards me was marked by a deference to which I was unused; and at the same time he put me at my ease by a merry twinkle of his eyes that was uncommonly attractive to a boy. Indeed the expression of his smooth round face, which always seemed to betoken a hardly suppressed mirth, made his converse very taking to young folk who saw in him, perhaps, a mirror of their own light hearts.

But I could not help but observe, at the good dinner to which we were soon set down, that though he seemed intimate with Fr. Cornish and courteous withal, Goldbetter was at no pains to have speech with him, and answered the father's questions with some reserve; insomuch that I was led to think the lawyer misliked the priest: a surmise in which, as you shall see later, I was both right and wrong.

After dinner Fr. Cornish excused himself on the plea of seeking a friend of whom he had many on the roads he travelled; for both at Lancaster and Chester he left me at the inn while he visited persons that had to do with the Company of Jesus. When he was gone, Mr. Goldbetter carried me to his office, and there unfolded the affairs to which he had sought my attention in the letter I had from him. These were chiefly concerned with my father's will, a copy of which he showed me while he pointed out the clauses of moment.

The will, in brief, left all the money at my father's

disposition in trust to Fr. Cornish, with full power to the priest of disbursal for my upbringing and education; and it disclosed the desire of the testator that I should be admitted to the Society of Jesus on reaching an age at which admission should be allowed. But no compulsion or undue spiritual pressure was to be brought to bear on me, should my inclinations be adverse to the adoption of the holy office.

In case that I should decline, or be found unfit for the calling, Fr. Cornish was to render me account of the moneys, some £18,000, when I should have reached the age of twenty-three, less £3,000 left to him, or rather for the benefit of the Company of Jesus of which he was a professed father.

Touching the land estate at Felton or realty, as the lawyer was at pains to impress upon me, the income thereof was to accumulate in the hands of George Goldbetter, attorney of Oswestry, who had the sole administration of the property until I should attain my twenty-fourth year.

Having satisfied himself that I had mastered the contents of the document (in so far as one so young and ignorant could do so), "Well now, Mr. Charles," said Goldbetter, "there are one or two matters arising out of this on which, with your permission, I will speak plainly to you. In the first place, I should tell you that two years ago, almost to the day, an Act was passed by Parliament as to the estates of Papists, that none should be inherited by any who turned not Protestant before eighteen years of age: the property in that case passing to the next Protestant heir at law.

On hearing this," he went on, "I moved at once, and none too soon; for your kinsman Mr. Richard Repton's son, though not your next of kin, was already a-field with the lawyers in London. I may tell you at once that I was successful, and by the help of Mr. Coke, who enjoys a large influence in the Court of Chancery, I obtained a writ of mandamus whereby you shall not be disturbed in the possession of your property by the new Act: seeing that your succession to it in trust actually occurred so many years before the passing of the law. It was not an easy matter to get this concession, but do you think you comprehend me?"

"I think I understand, sir, that you have been at much pains," said I, "and that I am to have the land for myself some day."

"Why, very well," says he; "the pains are naught, for your father's sake and your own. But now if you join the Jesuits you will, like enough, be urged to give this property to the society some day; nay, I am not learned in their ordinances, but I have heard that one of the conditions of membership is the surrender to the principals of the fortunes of those who would be ordained."

"I know nothing of their rules, but Fr. Cornish will tell you all," said I.

"I make no doubt he will, Mr. Charles," says Goldbetter; "but he cannot tell me, or you, the English law on this matter, and that is my present difficulty. I desire to preserve your property, both from the Jesuits and the English Government, until such time as you are old enough to judge for yourself what you would have done in the matter. Should

you incline to further the aims of the Jesuits before you shall be of age, I must with respect ask you to employ another lawyer to present their claims to me. For I hope I am too good a servant of his Majesty—pshaw! I should say her Majesty—let alone my duty to you, to lend a hand in transferring the best English land to those that acknowledge no monarch on earth. But, and this is what I would warn you of, I doubt the possibility, circumstances and present times considered, of your ever being able to convey the estate to any religious order; and therefore to attempt such before you are of full age would be to jeopard the land to no purpose.

"Now," he went on, "I have somewhat pleasanter things to tell you of. Ever since your dear father's death I have acted for Fr. Cornish in all matters relating to the probate of the will; he has yearly given me of his own free will an account of his trust which has satisfied me, and he has borne himself in all ways as a high-minded gentleman should. His love, too, of you cannot be called in question and, did the guidance of your future life rest with him alone, I should have no fear lest you be led to adopt an unsuitable calling.

"But I am made to remember that he is a priest and a Jesuit, whose will is under the dominion of those more powerful than he, and I must say what is on my mind. I am not now concerned to dissuade you from the course that I hear you have chosen; but you are over-young, if I may so say without discourtesy, to be called on to balance the gains against the losses of a life in the priesthood. And in the capacity of worldly adviser, chosen for you by

your father, I do now assure you of my readiness to give you counsel whensoever you shall be in need thereof. I would remind you, too, as earnestly as I can, that the step you are about to take is no way irrevocable, nor will be before you shall have bound yourself by vows which it is my duty to warn you not to take until you have communicated their purport to me."

When the lawyer ceased speaking he sat back in his chair and, clasping his hands, gazed at me with that appearance of struggling with his laughter to which I have already alluded and which, but for the gravity of his words, would have inclined me to think he handled this matter in jest. Such indeed was far from his intention, as I was not slow to perceive.

For my own part I found it far from easy to make the reply for which he seemed to wait. Here was certainly a friend attractive enough to a lad, and yet the substance of his later speech implied a reproach of Fr. Cornish that my loyalty to the father resented. Moreover I was not old enough to measure the compatibleness of possessing two friends whose faith, conduct, and views of life should be directly opposite, while their counsel might be equally disinterested. It seemed to my youthful mind that I could not place confidence in both, and the instinct of my upbringing and religious training leaned heavily on the side of Fr. Cornish.

It must have been long before I spoke, and then: "I thank you much, sir," said I, "for your concern of my affairs, and I will remember what you say; but in the matter of entering the priesthood, my

mind was made a twelvemonth since to follow my father's wishes, and it is not to be expected that one of a different faith should understand my desire for such a profession."

The remark was not discreet, and it was something lacking in gratitude to the man who was showing himself jealous for my worldly prosperity; but it is possible Mr. Goldbetter expected no better from my youth and religious bias, for he replied very kindly: "I have said that I am disposed for the moment not to turn you from your purpose, Mr. Charles, but to offer only, as in duty bound, my help if need be. There may come to you a time of difficulty (for our lives and interests are ever changing) when the very difference of our faith might make me a wiser counsellor than any with whom you may be living, and I ask but to be remembered by you should such a need arise But I have kept you over-long already and, with your leave, I will now take you for a walk on the town before it grows too late."

CHAPTER II

ST. OMER

WE lay at Oswestry, in Goldbetter's hospitable house, three nights to rest our nags, and while there our host found time to take me to Felton House, of which I had scarcely any remembrance. The house seemed in good case, in charge of a tenant of whom the lawyer spoke well.

We pursued our journey to Dover without hindrance, turning from Reading through Guildford and Tonbridge, in order to avoid the capital, which Fr. Cornish was not at that time desirous to visit. At Dover he sold my horse, and left his palfrey at the post to be called for by a friend at Deal, who would keep the beast until the father should return to England. From Calais we journeyed by mule to St. Omer, leaving our mails to be conveyed by wagon coach to the college. I should rather say we took mules to the village of Watten, about two leagues nearer to Calais than is the town of St. Omer, since the college stands next that village. [1]

It would be wearisome to you if I related at length all that befell me at the College of St. Omer. I shall therefore confine myself to such matters only as have import to my story, and get as soon as may be to the time when I quitted the place and began the adventures which changed the course of my life, and gave me a story to tell. Only, if it should appear to

some that I am over prolix at this part of my narrative, I would crave their indulgence to expediency; for I shall but tell you what is needful to a full comprehension of later events. And I should say it is with no pleasure that I dwell at all on this period of my life.

In case you shall not be acquainted with the inner organisation of the Company of Jesus, I should tell you that the order is divided into five grades, namely, novices, scholastics, temporal coadjutors, spiritual coadjutors, and professed fathers, which last rank cannot be held by any under the age of forty-five.

It is no easy matter, even for a member of the society, to explain precisely the functions of these grades, by reason of the fact that the rules for the guidance of colleges and houses under the order, albeit their observance is strictly enjoined on the superiors and rectors, can be altered on any good cause shown by the General of the society, who dwells in Rome: and also to some degree by the provincial or provost of the province wherein the college or house lies. Thus the duration of the novitiate is by custom two years, and the time required of the scholastic varies from fifteen to eighteen years before he is ordained a priest of the society, and enters the grade of spiritual coadjutor. While those who from disinclination to take holy orders, or by reason of unfitness for the sacred office (found in them by superiors and confessors), enter the grade of temporal coadjutor only after a service of ten years. But since it is known that every one of these periods of probation and education can be shortened or extended by order of the General, and

sometimes by a provincial, there is the utmost uncertainty in the mind of the novice touching his future position in the society, which hangs entirely on the sentiments of his superiors.

In the same way the time at which the first vows of obedience, chastity and poverty are made is subject to much alteration, and depends in each particular case on the age of entry, the worldly position and the wealth of the aspirant. In some cases the vows are exacted immediately after the close of the novitiate, to be repeated on entering the grade of temporal or spiritual coadjutor; while in other cases they are delayed for years. At least, such was the custom at St. Omer, and you shall see anon that this matter is important to my story. The temporal coadjutors are members of the order who assist in the lay offices of the company, some of which are menial, while others again are of an exalted kind, such as the writing of sermons, treatises, histories and the like.

After my presentation to the superior of the college, I was taken to the place of probation, which was a small building within the precincts of the college, where I bid farewell to Fr. Cornish with so great a sorrow that I could not be consoled until I had his promise that I should see him again presently.

"Obedience," he had said often during the journey from Carlton, "will be your chief sacrifice, Charles; I have no fears for the rest." And he reminded me of this again as he took leave of me with a face near as long as my own. For indeed I think he loved me well.

I passed some seventeen days on probation, holding intercourse during that space of time with none save the father designated by the superior to confess me; and I could not but compare my situation with that of a prisoner in solitary confinement, notwithstanding my chamber was clean and sweet with fresh-air, and my food wholesome and sufficient. But how severe soever was this preparation, I am certain that it wrought for good, if the later training is held to be the wisest for the purposes of the society, and in any event it did me no ill.

I was then admitted as a novice into the first grade of the society, and at the same time my name was enrolled on the college books as a student; my days were passed in study, in ministering to the sick in hospital and, as I gained a sufficient knowledge of the French, in teaching the foundations of our faith to the poor and to children. My novitiate lasted two years when, with the sanction of the superior, I was advanced to the grade of scholastic, which in a measure resembles the condition of an undergraduate in an English University (but with much more restraint), and in which I followed diligently the study of arts.

It was when I had been in this grade for a matter of three or four years that I began to be confirmed in doubts which had assailed me for a long time back that my temper and condition were unsuited to the high calling which had been chosen for me in the strange manner I have tried to describe. At least that is about the time of what my superiors were later pleased to call my first rebellion; though, in looking back through the years that are since passed,

I can now perceive that what was then like the awakening from sleep, might have been indeed the falling asleep of a slumbering conscience. In other words, I am free to admit my share of blame in the beginning, by granting that my inclinations may well have been the parents of my scruples. It is hard, otherwise, to comprehend why those whose duty to the order and whose spiritual gain, one may suppose, were alike concerned to keep me faithful to the order, should have helped to make its discipline repugnant to me. When I look back, as I say, with the desire to apprehend only the truth, it appears to me probable that my early up-bringing was always hostile to the attitute of subjection which my tutors strove to exact of me: and also that, unknown to me at the time, my spirit craved for the bodily exercises which had given place to a life of physical inaction.

It is true that at Carlton I yielded to the same discipline as the other children and that, in matters of faith, I was not behind the rest of the family in the simple obedience which the very young find no difficulty in rendering their parents and confessors. And in fact I can say that I have never had any serious doubts of the Holy Writ which is common to most of the Christian sects, so far as I know them. But so long as we always spoke truth, which he demanded with severity, Mr. Oswald allowed us much freedom of conversation; nay, he encouraged us to question him on the natural phenomena we observed. And nothing pleased him more than to hear us judge the successes and failures of the huntsman when casting for a fox after a check, or in lifting his hounds to a weak scent. So that you are

to understand I was in a measure trained by him to have a judgment of my own, and not to lean on others in the small affairs of daily life. And he taught us more than this. In all the wonders of nature that interested us, it was his aim to exhort us to use all the powers of reason with which we were endowed as our best guide in search of the Creator's hand.

My chief religious instructor and confessor was one Fr. Félix Saussier, against whose zeal for the order I shall say no word; but, whether it was from his wounded perception of my mislike of some of the discipline he sought to enforce, or whether he foresaw my innate unfitness for the holy office, he was wont to examine me with an oft-repeated particularity on those very points in the spiritual exercises against which my mind rebelled as a man's stomach does against poison.

There was nothing new to excuse my wrangling; but he had been expounding again the exercise that runs somewhat as follows: "When it seems to me that I am commanded by my superior to do a thing against which my conscience revolts as sinful, and my superior judges otherwise, it is my duty to yield my doubts to him, unless I am otherwise constrained by evident reasons"; and the question again arose of the purport of the words "evident reasons." Said I, "I am surely to be the judge of the reasons that constrain me."

To which he replied, "Not so, my son, as I have many times told you; the reasons that constrain you must be submitted to the decision of the superior, who will judge if they are a valid constraint."

"Then the words have no meaning to me," said I; "for if the reasons, with the doubts, must yield to the judgment of the superior, there would be no exception to the rule of blind obedience, which the exercise plainly contemplates."

"There are no exceptions to the rule of obedience," replied the father, "and the clause which seems to you a stumbling block is but the invitation to lay your scruples before your superior. Were it otherwise there would indeed be no meaning in the words of that other exercise, which says: 'I ought to be like a corpse which has neither will nor understanding, or like a small crucifix which is turned about at the will of him that holds it.'"

Now I had often repeated this exercise too; but it had galled me worse the more I thought upon the awful meaning of the words, and now "I am quite ready," said I, "to fulfil the vows of obedience in all spiritual matters; and in so far as I have yielded my life to the service of God in the order, I regret not for a moment the sacrifice. But to be a corpse is surely to outrage Him who gave us life; to yield the power of reason, which I take it is the faculty of discerning good from evil and crooked from straight, the faculty of which God has made a gift to man for his own use, is not man's to give away again to fellow men. It is not mine to give."

You are to bear in mind that I had now reached the age of eighteen; an age at which budding manhood is prone to assert his lately-acquired philosophy and to assume that what seems to him right can surely not be wrong in others' sight. My speech to Fr. Saussier cost me some emotion and a bitter

pain that I should have strained the bonds of affection that certainly held us in union at St. Omer, and it also cost me some seven days of solitary penance, which was in a measure consolation to me. I minded not the punishment; it was as though I were paying for my right of free speech. But I felt deeply the reproaches of the college superior before whom I was haled and who designated the offence of wrangling with a confessor as a disgrace to the order.

This was said in the presence of other scholastics after a lecture in arts which I attended soon after the conversation with Fr. Saussier, and the sting of the words was all the sharper by reason of the honour in which I held the esteemed college superior.

The end of my first rebellion was a letter I got not long afterwards from Fr. Cornish, in which he chid me gently for my crime, sought to soothe the pain of the superior's rebuke by reminding me how needful to the order was a rigid discipline, and urged me by our mutual affection to bear with all my superiors in the religious catechisms until experience would show me that I should never be asked to act in opposition to a clean conscience.

But the end of my college life was now not far off. And though, perhaps, from long years of a discipline that I found most ways kind, I was sorry to cause them pain, I could no more control my speech at the time than a cannon ball can resist the powder that gives it motion. Was it, as they said, the deaf adder that refuses to hear, or was it young manhood's awakened perception of his true functions—who shall

say? Haply it was a little of both, and haply my story shall help you to read the riddle.

My second offence took place about seven or eight months after my first rebellion, and again it was Fr. Saussier who brought home to me my transgression. But there the likeness of the second occasion to the first ends, for my crime was now one of omission, and it was followed by no immediate punishment.

Two of my fellow scholastics were seen by me reading together from a book that, by the strange binding, I had reason to think was not one belonging to the students' library. This alone would not be a breach of the very strict rules on this point if sanction to read the book had first been obtained of the superior, and of that matter, whatsoever I might suspect, I knew naught. The culprits were discovered by Fr. Saussier; one of them was expelled, and it came somehow to the knowledge of the father that I had been a witness of their misdoing. To me he came and asked if I had marked the sin.

"Yes," said I, "I saw them reading, but I paid no heed to it beyond observing that the book did not seem to belong to our library."

"Then," says he, "you knew they were committing sin, and yet you failed to report it?"

"Father," said I, "before I could know they were committing sin I would have to be sure the book did not belong to our library, and also that they had not permission to read it. And even if I knew these things of a certainty, I have not yet been told that I am to spy and report on my fellows."

"And you who can argue thus," said he, "are one whose conscience so lately stood betwixt him and the judgment of his confessor."

He said no more, but turned on his heel from me, and though I clearly perceived that my conduct might be open to reproach, I was powerless to mend it, or so it seemed to me at the time.

I have since learned some of the sacrifices that are necessary to the good soldier in following his chief; and the rules of the Company of Jesus were framed on the principles of military obedience and self-denial. Now there is this difference, to my thinking, betwixt the practices of military discipline and those of the Jesuits that, whereas a blind obedience is exacted of the soldier in furthering the plans of his captain, it is not demanded of him by his superiors that he shall approve all the particulars of the strategy which he may have aided to a successful issue. But in the society it was not enough for the member to have obeyed the command; he must likewise teach himself to approve it under penalty of censure that he fails in the promotion of "God's Greater Glory," which is their countersign or watch-word. And his approval must be forthcoming when he is afterwards examined on the whole matter. If approval of the mandate must accompany the obedience to it, then it would be juster that the first be got from the subordinate before, and not after, he is called on to blindly obey the second.

It will be observed that my second transgression amounted only to the lack of approval of an order which was not actually given to me, since, though we were told to report grave irregularities on the

part of our fellow scholastics to superiors, it was not enjoined (on me at least) that we were to be at pains to spy out misdemeanours.

It must have been nearer three than two weeks after this occurrence that, as I was crossing the great quadrangle of the college near by the main entrance, I met Fr. Cornish suddenly face to face. As I had been wont to receive warning some days in advance of his coming to the college, I was startled to see him thus unexpected, and supposed he was but newly arrived. Herein I was wrong, for when he had greeted me, "I have been here three days on your concerns," says he, "and I was even now seeking you to ask if you will be ready in an hour's time to come with me?"

"And where are we going?" I asked.

"To Paris, my son. Ask me no more now," says he; "but say if you will bear me company? So will I have a coach to meet us without the walls that there may be no commotion of farewells."

"Is not this something sudden?" said I.

"Aye, sudden to you, Charles, no doubt," and he spoke as though to himself; "but to me these three days last past are like three years that are gone from my life, and my spirit is sore weary of the strife of words. Still, God help me, it must be for the best. Yes; it must needs be *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, for all my poor weak reasoning to the contrary. And if not, He will show me the way before it is too late."

"And why," said I, "would you take me to Paris?"

"I take you to Paris," says he, like a man awakening from sleep, "or I offer to take you there,

since they will have it no other way, for your good; to give you time for quiet contemplation before you renounce the priesthood; to show you that you can still serve God in 'Ours,' if the other may not be; give Him, too, a more acceptable service, perhaps, than any we can offer who are already old before we bear any responsibility in the order. At all events, Charles, you shall have the choice; you shall judge for yourself in the matter, after consideration of it. Only say that you will trust your old friend, your saintly parents' friend, and come with me to Paris."

His eyelids glistened as he laid his hand on my shoulder, and his use of the word "old" twice in such a short space made me mark, with something that is akin to pity, the widening lines about his face and the spreading white of the curly hair above his ears. I thought of his hard, restless life of travel, of his cheerful unselfishness and his reverence for the memory of my parents. I thought of my boyhood's only friends at Carlton and again of the man before me who had given me those friends and who, since I had been at the college, typified home to me in the only sense I then knew it.

I thought on all these things, I say, and was filled with an intense yearning (pity of him or myself, call it what you will) to follow him in peace without further question for the time.

"Say no more, father," said I, "I go with you to Paris, or wheresoever you wish to take me."

CHAPTER III

PARIS

IT would, I think, be difficult to conceive a greater change in life than that which comes to a young man who leaves an ecclesiastical seminary for the first time to take a part in the activity of the world outside. In all such cases it must be, at best, as the release of the sapling tree from the stake to which it has been till lately bound. And since it can scarce be otherwise than that the young tree feels a nakedness and a loss of support when first exposed to undue wind; so also the young scholar, ignorant of the application of his learning to the daily needs of lay surroundings, is diffident of his position, shrinks from the contact that alone can give it him, and supposes that it will take a life-time for him to learn to stand unaided whose every waking hour has hitherto been under close supervision.

But when, as in my case, the new life finds the emancipated youth in Paris, the change is bewildering almost to distraction. Seen only from the streets, the city overpowers the stranger by the beautiful architecture of its public and private palaces, its churches and religious buildings, and by its grand statues, bridges and fountains. The streets themselves are for the most part liberally wide; and some are paved with blocks of freestone—as are many of the country roads—that are more comfortable to the

feet, and give out less noise under the coaches than the pebble-stone paving of English and the most of the foreign towns.

I question, however, if the external attractions of the city are not surpassed by the wonderful appointments of the interiors of all the chief buildings, and by the luxurious furniture of the dwellings of the rich, which likewise enshrine the rarest works of art and curiosity of the world.

The coach in which we had posted for four days from St. Omer drew up early one morning at a house in the Rue St. Louis, where we descended, and Fr. Cornish told me we were come to the end of our journey. We were met at the door by a young man of about thirty-five years, who was dressed in the extreme of fashion, wore a sword, and greeted us with an affability that appeared extravagant to one ignorant of the customs of Paris. To Fr. Cornish he drew himself up very stiff, and then, with his left hand on his sword hilt, uncovered his head by sweeping his hat off with his right hand till it reached out far behind him. He bowed low at the same time, drawing back his right foot to accompany the movement of his arm.

"My dear father," says he, "you are indeed welcome, my dear sir. I have been counting the hours against your arrival, and thought you had been here earlier from the letter you writ me. It has been dull work waiting for you, my dear father, but—what have we here? Ah! of course, your young friend, my young friend that is to be." Then turning, he observed the same ceremonial obeisance to me as he had to Fr. Cornish, and preceded us into

the house which was well appointed, though not large.

Fr. Cornish had told me on the journey that it was proposed to place me under the care of this gentleman, whose name was Francis Tresham, and whose house we were now entering. But the father did not discourse much, nor enlarge greatly, on the proposed arrangement; telling me that its fulfilment was subject in part to my own inclinations and in part to the will of the provost or provincial of the company in the province of France, who dwelt in Paris, and whom we were to see soon after we arrived in that city. Indeed I had no notion that the affair was even gone so far that Mr. Tresham awaited my coming to live with him, and I was not a little taken aback when he greeted me as I have told you.

It was not long before we were seated at a breakfast table that was supplied with a liberality to which I was wholly unused, though I found later that it was by no means excessive according to the usage of Paris at that time.

During this meal Fr. Cornish mentioned that he purposed to carry me without delay to the provincial, to arrange the particulars of my residence with Tresham, when, "I have seen the provincial, my dear father," says he, "and all is now settled. He would be glad to see you soon and have your approval; but there is nothing more to be arranged if Mr. Repton is willing to live with me."

Fr. Cornish appeared somewhat astonished; but he said naught: and presently after breakfast he betook himself to the Jesuits' College hard by, after committing me to the care of Tresham. This gentle-

man was so kind as to offer to guide me in the choice of clothes suitable to my new condition, and we set out together to visit a tailor who was in some request amongst men of fashion. He was so very precise in the instructions he gave to the fellow who took my measure, that I could not forbear telling him how little it mattered to me whether I was in the fashion or not; seeing I knew nothing about such things. I might have spared myself the pains of interfering, for my remarks were unheeded by Tresham, who continued his orders to the obsequious tailor with even greater persistence, until he was satisfied the man understood all that was required of him. The tailor quitted, he carried me to a bootmaker in the neighbourhood; thence to a perruquier and lastly to an armourer where, after much trial, he chose a sword of a temper to his liking, which, he said, should never fail me.

The day was well advanced when we had ended our business, and Tresham then led me to a fashionable tavern in the Rue St. Honoré, where he ordered dinner. While it was preparing, we strolled along the Rue du Louvre which brought us to the river bank, and there, turning to the left, we followed the river until we were come to the Pont Neuf. Here we tarried to watch for a while the continuous stream of coaches and pedestrians that thronged the bridge and bewildered my eyes. I had, of course, never seen aught to compare with this vast concourse whose length looked to be interminable. And, though I had been told, and had read, of the huge multitudes that gather together in cities, it came to my mind at once that these things must be seen to be known and

apprehended. In the same way, it is of no avail to tell an inland dweller that the sea is a vast lake; he must needs see it before he can grasp its magnitude.

If it was by design that Tresham brought me, in the first hours of my emancipation, to witness this restless scene, it was surely well contrived by him to teach me my own littleness in the world which was unknown to me, and the right understanding of which could only be gained by means of such as he, who knew it intimately. The attraction of observing the busy, but orderly, crowd was soon tempered by the thought of my own unimportance, not to say uselessness therein; so that at last I turned away from the sight with something of a shudder, to find Tresham's piercing eyes fixed on me as though he read my inmost thoughts.

Without a word passed between us, we returned to the Rue St. Honoré and found our dinner ready for us at the tavern. Over a flask of wine, of which he persuaded me to drink but one glass, my companion grew somewhat confidential, and unfolded certain particulars of his manner of life in Paris; though to what extent I was to share it, when my education in polite accomplishments should be completed, was in large measure left to my own conjectures.

"When we know each other somewhat better," said he, "we can talk freely of our future plans; and a good understanding, my dear sir, between men of our rank in the society will do more to lighten the labour and good work to be wrought than countless orders and commands. And it is good work, none better. But, my dear Charles, you have a lot to learn. I can see that."

"Yes," said I, with a proper humility, "I am quite ignorant of the great world without 'Ours'; and as for Paris, I fear I shall never get to know the ways of such a vast place"; and I was about to add that I could scarce perceive what good I might do, even if I were not so ignorant, when:

"I must teach you to ride first," said he, as if to himself, "and then the use of your sword, for which you have a pretty figure that frames well."

"Oh!" said I, "I am used to horses, or at least I should say I was used to them, since I have not been on horseback for some years. But as for the sword, I have been taught that I am to be a man of peace, and I see no sort of sense in wearing a tool strapped to my side for which I have no use."

"Why, look you," says he, "we of 'Ours' never use the sword save in defence of self or the order; and the surest way for a peaceful man to keep his weapon in its scabbard is to have such skill in its use that few will dare provoke him to draw it. It is, therefore, the bounden duty of a coadjutor to acquire what knowledge he may in sword play; so that if he shall haply be called on to defend the faith, he may work his weapon to advantage; while the knowledge that a man has skill in fence travels abroad as swiftly as ill news, and may often save him from the need to prove his superiority. If what we do, my dear sir, be always *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, we should not shrink even from a little blood-letting in the doing of it; and after all the martyr's crown will fit none the worse from having been gained in a scuffle in place of on the scaffold."

I looked quickly at the man as he spoke the last

words, for, young and ignorant though I was, they seemed to me to carry with them a light jest, if not a sneer, on a matter that most persons hold to be sacred. But his face disclosed no sign save deep interest in a serious subject, and I was fain to smother my suspicions, and to say aloud that I must needs submit to be guided by him in the affair of learning the use of the sword.

"That is well spoken, my dear Charles," said he, "trust me, my dear sir, and I shall not fail you. I have been told that you are one who would know the reasons why, when orders are given; to look before you leap, shall we say? And I don't quarrel with that trait neither, if there is no hanging back when the reasons given are good ones. But perhaps we should be returning home to meet Fr. Cornish, who is to present you to the provincial this evening, I understand."

When we were back at the house in the Rue St. Louis, we found Fr. Cornish awaiting me with a request that I should obey the bidding of the provincial, who would see me as soon as convenient. We accordingly walked to the Jesuits' College in the Rue St. Antoine, and were conducted through the library to an adjacent room that was furnished with a rich carving in a dark wood, and hung with large paintings of which the most noteworthy was a life-size picture of the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

The provincial presently joined us and, when I had been presented by Fr. Cornish, he told me with a smile that he supposed he knew more of me than I of him. His hair was well-nigh white, albeit there were no wrinkles in his face, and his voice and figure

were those of a man who had scarce reached middle age; while his manners were courteous and polished to refinement. He spoke French with an accent that was new to me though, so clear was its enunciation, I accepted it by instinct to be the right one; and he addressed me in a tone that was not without a kindly sympathy.

"You have been brought to Paris," says he, "by reason of the reports from St. Omer that, for some time past, describe you as lacking in spiritual obedience, though in most other respects you are said to be a promising scholastic. The sin which makes an obstacle of obedience in spiritual matters is one that is usually peculiar to youth alone; and in most cases it is overcome little by little as age advances, until the wisdom of the trained man shows him the need of submitting to the will of those who are more spiritually experienced than he. But in your case I hear that the reluctance to be ruled by your spiritual advisers has increased with your growth in years. And albeit you are said to have many qualities that endear you to your instructors and would augur well for a useful life in the ministry of 'Ours,' still, the superior at St. Omer, and also your friend the reverend father here, are in doubt of your power to bring your will into subjection to the extent necessary to holy orders."

Fr. Cornish bowed his head as who should signify assent, and I remained silent, because it seemed to me that the man spoke the truth.

"I am told," continues the provincial, "that your zeal for 'Ours,' which is without reproach, deserves consideration. And we are therefore not unwilling,

since it is in our power, to propose a new course of life to you, by which you may be able to serve God and the company without coming into conflict with your spiritual superiors. While time will thus be granted to you wherein you may learn to perceive the wisdom of our rules, and of the exercises enjoined by our saintly founder. Let me see," says he, turning to Fr. Cornish, "what vows has this scholastic made at St. Omer?"

"None, I think," said the father.

"That is unusual, is it not?" said the provincial. "How many years has he been in the company?"

"Near five years," says Fr. Cornish, with some hesitation; "and I supposed you knew the reasons why it was held to be convenient that he should make no vows until he should come of age."

"True, true, I had forgot it," says the other. "He has a long minority, if I remember right, and a guardian in England who is an heretic. Yes, I have it now. His profession of poverty was postponed by order of the General, until he could speak for himself. That is right. It is expedient that none in possession of wealth should vow poverty before they reach maturity, lest there should be cause of reproach from evil tongues of slanderers."

"Nay, with submission, that is not the whole reason," says Fr. Cornish. "It is true that Charles Repton will not be of age till he is twenty-three years old; but he is possessed of property in English land, over which he has no control during his minority. It could not, therefore, be sold or mortgaged, while he is under age, for his own benefit or that of the company; and it was held that a vow

of poverty might not be binding in English law so long as a postulant had wealth which he could not dispose of."

"You put the matter in a somewhat different way, brother, but sure we both mean the same thing," says the provincial. "The vows were not exacted of the novice in this case, from motives of delicacy. Is that not so?"

Fr. Cornish shook his head, while I looked from one to the other speaker in some amazement, though I comprehended not the full meaning of the words in dispute. After a pause: "I say it with all respect," says my old friend; "but I, too, am a guardian of Charles Repton, and it was my duty to observe the instructions of his father's will in relation to the money, as it was the duty of the other guardian to administer the landed estate. Both guardians were agreed that the wishes of the testator could not be carried out if Charles should make a vow of poverty while he is under age; and it was I who urged the Father-General not to exact the vows at the end of his novitiate, lest the will should become null and void, and the land be forfeited by my ward, whether he should ultimately join the priesthood of 'Ours' or no. Charles should know this, and I could not well explain it to him, after this meeting, if I left his provincial in ignorance. That was the reason for the first postponement of the vows, but they have been postponed again *sine die* by reason of——."

"Enough said. I thank you for putting me in the right of it," says the other; "and it is like you, brother, to split the hair that is often the only

division between truth and falsehood, no matter what the world may say to the contrary." Then, looking at me again, he said: "You have a guardian, young man, who is nearer to God, I think, than many of his superiors in 'Ours.' But now we come to the point on which I wished to see you. We have thought that since your faults are but those which hinder you, for the moment, from contemplating the priesthood, you may be unwilling to endure the reproach of being discharged from the company, if we can find you work to do *Ad majorem Dei gloriam.* And I think we can promise you this, if you will place yourself under the guidance of Mr. Francis Tresham, an agent in whom we have much confidence. You will live with him, and he will see to your instruction in those qualities that are necessary to a young gentleman of birth and position, while your spiritual well-being shall be the care of a confessor at this college, whom I will appoint. The college will be a refuge for you at those times when you desire a respite from your other occupations, and you can see me when you have aught to make known to me, or find that your will is in sufficient subjection to undertake again the preparation for the priesthood. But in what concerns your new course of life, it would, I think, be fitting for you to choose Mr. Tresham for your guide. It only remains to ask if you are willing to grasp this offer, which is a mark of extreme favour, in place of rejection from the order."

As I said before, the provincial spoke nothing but the truth; there was no manner of doubt in my mind about that, and I could not gainsay it. I had been guilty

of a rebellious opposition to those who were placed in spiritual authority over me and, if one came to consider of it, what other course than expulsion was open to the society if I should reject this offer? It did not occur to me then that my possession of property could sway the decisions of the Father-General, for, though I had been interested in the recent slight altercation between the two fathers, I lacked the knowledge necessary to the full comprehension of the rigid honesty of my guardian's nice distinction.

But I think my mind was most attracted by the notion of a life of responsibility, which this offer seemed to discover, and which had been, I remembered, already alluded to by Fr. Cornish when he first broke to me the proposal to carry me to Paris. At least I accepted the offer, as it was, of course, known I would, and we presently left the college.

Fr. Cornish took leave of me at the door of Tresham's house, and he told me he was quitting Paris the next day for England. He gave me a purse of gold and said I should hear from him and Goldbetter anon.

In the Rue de la Ferronnerie was an academy under the direction of one Monsieur Lagaraye, where young gentlemen were taught to ride, fence and dance. This academy was much frequented by the nobility and persons of quality and fashion, who went to watch the progress made by their sons and kinsmen in the various exercises. Thither Tresham led me when I was suitably clothed, and he was at much pains to see that I had the best instruction possible.

He was soon satisfied with my horsemanship, and bid M. Lagaraye devote the time spent in the manège to the fencing lessons, by which arrangement I was

kept during many months, for several hours a day, at the foil play. I had also some practice with the broad-sword; albeit the custom of using this weapon was then almost discontinued, save by the military. I think I must have been a shy pupil in the beginning, and very awkward at the unwonted exercise. But as I gained some confidence, and with it a measure of skill, I came to love the exertion which sent the blood through my veins in a fashion to which I had long been unused. It gave me sound sleep o' nights, and whetted my appetite insomuch that I could scarce satisfy it by two meals a day: and not seldom I went hungry to bed.

As for the dancing, I had some lessons certainly; but my aversion to this pastime, coupled with my ungainliness in its performance, caused Tresham, I think, to yield to my request to exchange that instruction for more of the fencing, until I was at the foil play near all day.

It was now the early spring of 1708. The country was suffering grievously from the war then raging between France and the allied armies of Austria, Prussia, England and Holland. The unsuccess of the French arms, and the grinding taxation to which it gave rise, had cowed the spirit of the population and well-nigh drained the resources of the country.

True to his word, Fr. Cornish writ me frequently, and I had letters from Goldbetter on my affairs, informing me how the estate at Felton prospered, and offering to remit me money if I should need it. But Fr. Cornish supplied me with what was needful to my small wants, and Tresham paid the costs of entertainment and education from funds whose source

I was not curious to learn. The attorney exhorted me more than once to eschew the Jacobites above all things, and to take heed lest I should be drawn into any understanding with the followers of the Pretender; since even a suspicion that I was favourable to that faction might seriously endanger my inheritance.

"I want you to play truant to the academy, my dear Charles," says Tresham, one fine morning in early March, "and ride with me to St. Germain-en-Laye to-day on some affairs of 'Ours.'"

In a stable a few paces down a side street off the Rue St. Louis were kept the horses belonging to the Jesuits' College, and of these we had the use whensoever our occasions might require them.

We were soon on horseback covering the four and a half leagues that lie between Paris and the Castle which was lent by King Louis to James II. of England, and, since that poor exile's death seven years before, had been the home and so-called Court of his son James, the Pretender, and his mother. The Chevalier de St. George, as he was best known in France, was not always in residence, and was said by some in Paris to be away even at this moment. Rumour had it that there were many schemes afoot connected with the invasion of England, which were no sooner planned and made ready for fulfilment, than their due execution would be prevented by some change in the military or political designs of the old King of France. Albeit his comings and goings attracted no great attention outside the Court and the members of the Company of Jesus by whom he was to some extent surrounded.

Tresham had certain traffic with the Castle. I

had once borne a packet from him to the chamberlain there, and it was common knowledge, of course, that the Jesuits were in favour of the restoration. But thus far he had scarce mentioned the matter in conversation with me, or given me to suppose that he was more concerned with the Pretender's cause than with the multitude of other occupations which seemed to demand his untiring energy. And, by reason of Goldbetter's letters of warning, I was not inquisitive to obtain news of the doings of the Jacobites.

The day was fair, though cold withal, and the bite in the air served to remind us that the winter was hardly gone, although the birds were beginning the subdued melody that speaks of early spring.

We crossed the river by the bridge of Neuilly and, from Nanterre, followed the new road that runs for the last two leagues of the way along the left bank of the Seine on high ground which commands a fine view of the country to the north of the river. The Castle is on the same bank, standing yet higher than the road, and it is a vastly imposing pile when seen from the far river bank. The building is irregular, and consists now of two castles which belong to different periods of architecture, and are separated, the old from the new, by a court of an intermediate period of design. From the court, six or seven terraces cut out of the natural hill, and, supported by pillars and arches of brick and stone, descend to near the river level; and the lowest terrace forms a beautiful flower garden that overhangs the stream. Some of the terraces had formerly water-falls and grottos beneath the arches, but these were now in some decay and disuse. To the north-west of the terraces

lies the great forest of St. Germain, which is stocked with deer, boars, wolves and other game. And the whole place was truly, while it lasted, a princely gift or loan (or whatsoever it was) that, nevertheless, was rudely snatched away from the Chevalier a few years later, at the dictation of the victorious country which had disowned its Stuart dynasty; although the Queen-Mother still made it her home till her death in 1718.

The Royal Standard of England was flying when we came in sight of the gates of the new castle, by which we would know that the Chevalier was in residence, and that I had been misinformed as to the date of the latest projected invasion of England. His valour was abundantly proved later at the battles of Oudenarde and Malplaquet; but these comings and goings led to some girding at his abortive schemes on the part of some of the Protestants about St. Germain. For it is to be remembered that this little Court, though most ways ruled by the Jesuits, had yet attached to it many faithful Scottish and English Protestant families; and these were openly for bolder methods than the others favoured. In consequence it was sometimes noised abroad that there were dissensions amongst the Jacobites, and that those who prevailed were more wishful to preserve from untimely extinction the cause they had embraced than to further it by manifestation of the undoubted manly qualities of him who embodied it. And after all, he was but a lad like myself, who had not completed his twentieth year.

We left our horses at the stables, and Tresham who was, it seemed, expected, was forthwith conducted along a wide gallery leading from the main

hall, while I was left to await him in a large room off the same. I had been seated there for near an hour when a messenger entered and bid me follow him to a room in which I found Tresham and divers other gentlemen, who were all standing up.

A moment after, a folding door was opened at the far side of the room, and there entered a young man whom I knew at once to be the Chevalier from the deference paid to him. He was dressed in black velvet that, despite the sombre look it gave to his thin colourless features, became his dignified and graceful carriage. His black eyes which were long and somewhat oblique, and his very dark complexion, disclosed a foreign air; but I have heard none deny that his was a face that made promise of a kind nature in its bearer, as the exceeding slenderness of his tall person spoke to moderation of living.

I was so much taken aback that I had but time to observe this when he approached Tresham who, after a few words passed between them, made a sign to me to come near.

"This is Charles Repton, of whom your Majesty was pleased to enquire," says he; and then, "he is becoming a good swordsman and promises in time to be of service to the order and to you, Sire."

The prince took me kindly by the hand and said, "We are always glad to welcome loyal subjects here, more especially if they have to do with the Company of Jesus. A man who can satisfy Francis Tresham's exacting loyalty and devotion to the society must needs give great promise, and I am pleased to hear you well spoken of."

He turned away from me as he finished speaking,

and I was left to conjecture that if he had really expressed a wish to see me it must have been merely with a view to identification of me at some future time. At least that was my impression.

While we rid back to Paris I made so bold as to inform Tresham of Goldbetter's warning to me to avoid the Jacobites.

"I don't take you," says he, quite calmly, though I observed he was put out. "If you are going to serve 'Ours,' you can hardly reckon on choosing the manner of your service; and it seems to me it should suffice for you to be told that no English Jesuit can be aught but a follower of the house of Stuart. It was only under a Stuart (and that James II.) that the company came to be tolerated in England; and mark me, it will be only under another Stuart that they will regain the power they have now lost."

This is now, of course, well known to me, but at the time he spoke he might well have used a strange tongue for all I could comprehend of the matter. And it is but justice to say they taught me no politics at St. Omer, and very little of the history of my own country, whatsoever their later intentions might have been.

"You must please bear with me," said I, in some humility, for I apprehended I had trod on ground of which I was ignorant. "I have no politics, Tresham, nor impatience to learn them before my time. But what does seem clear to my mind is that I am at least not in the wrong of it to pay some heed to the counsels of those who have been charged to guide me."

"And who," says he, quickly, "have been charged to guide you if it's not Fr. Cornish and myself?"

"Fr. Cornish," said I, "has never said a word, good or bad, of the Jacobites, that I can call to mind. And as for you, I think you will bear me out that you have never laid great stress on my cultivation of their acquaintance. Now, Mr. Goldbetter has writ me with some misgiving, more than once, to warn me. But, perhaps," I added, "you did not know I own some land in England?"

"Oh! my dear Charles, you must not think, my dear sir," says he, "that I am indifferent to what so nearly concerns you and the company. This matter has had my consideration, in the case of other friends, for some time past, and I submit the issue to you as it presents itself to me, and as I think both your duty and your interest can best be accommodated. See here, we have had two revolutions in England on the question of the monarchy in sixty years. They have thrice changed the dynasty in that time, and now we have the Act of Settlement, passed in 1701, by way of securing the throne to a German. But will any wise man wager his money, or even prophesy, that we have done with the affair? Why it is hardly a secret that Queen Anne herself is privily in favour of being succeeded by her half-brother, James III., God bless him. And small blame to her: she would be an unnatural sister who did not wish it. No, the temper of the country just now is such that there is no knowing which way the wind may blow to-morrow; and while men like Marlborough, Harley, Ormond, St. John, and a host of others are just watching the vane, there is little to fear from a Jacobite persecution. And at any moment it might serve a man ill to have been known as anti-

Jacobite. Your property is actually safer at present in the hands of a Jacobite than it is in those of a Hanoverian; and withal, your duty to 'Ours' plainly appeals to you not to ignore the cause of the Stuarts."

We rid a long way in silence while I considered of Tresham's philosophy. Every man knows now that there was much truth in this argument; and it is quite permissible to believe, even yet, that if the characters of those who pressed the Stuart claims had been cleaner in the eyes of the people, and if, moreover, James would have renounced the Catholic faith, George I. would never have ascended the throne of England. But I knew none of these things at the time. At last I replied:—

"I think there is wisdom in your counsel, and I thank you for it. There can, of course, be no treason in wishing for what the Queen on the throne wants, and it may be that Goldbetter knows less than you of the prospects of the Chevalier. But had I not better strive to separate duty from inclination or gain in this tangle? If my duty leads me into dealings with the Jacobites, I must needs follow it, and there's an end of counting the costs, though I hope you won't suppose that I chafe at your judgment if I ask Fr. Cornish to confirm it."

"No, my dear Charles," said Tresham as we reached the stable-yard. "I don't ask you, my dear sir, to become a red-hot Jacobite in any event. I merely want you to help us indirectly, and I hope I have shown you that you cannot go wrong to acknowledge the claim of James only to the same extent as does Queen Anne. Nothing more, believe

me; and write Fr. Cornish by all means, bearing in mind my limitation, of course."

For many weeks after this talk I was not sent to St. Germain, nor was the subject of the Chevalier mentioned by Tresham, for the very good reason that three days later he took himself off from the house in the Rue St. Louis, and was absent for the better part of a month; while I continued my course of instruction at Lagaraye's Academy.

The cause of his absence was not made known by him to me before he quitted Paris, though it soon became the common talk of the city that the great enterprise against the Scottish coast was at last being undertaken; and I was not slow to connect Tresham's departure with that event. It would not help my story if I gave you a particular account of this abortive expedition, and the truth is I got very little information concerning the achievement, since neither Tresham, nor any of the others who assisted at it, spoke of it with any freedom. It set out from Dunquerque about the 18th March after a long delay, by reason of the prince taking the measles at that port, and it returned early in April without having accomplished anything. Some said the Chevalier's sickness upset their calculations, and others declared that the project was always doomed to failure through the vigilance of the English fleet.

Towards the end of April the Chevalier returned to St. Germain-en-Laye, and about the same time Tresham resumed his busy life in the Rue St. Louis.

As the time drew near for the prince's departure to join the camp of the Duke of Burgundy at Valenciennes, which was fixed for an early date in

June, 1708, Tresham visited the Castle almost daily, and sometimes twice in a day. I did not bear him company, though I now became a constant bearer of letters and packets to and fro, and at times would receive letters at St. Germain for carriage to Versailles and other parts. I had got no answer to the letter I writ to Fr. Cornish touching my intercourse with the Jacobites, and, until I should hear to the contrary, I conceived it to be my duty to follow Tresham's instructions. So you see that, under his guidance, my energies on behalf of "Ours" at this time were confined to the duties of an express, bating my occasional attendance at a sodality or club, established by Tresham, to which I had been introduced somewhat earlier.

A couple of rooms were hired at the back of a chandler's shop, and appointed with some profusion, good wine and food being furnished, when demanded, from a neighbouring eating-house. Thither a company, whereof Tresham had the selection, would assemble either all together when specially called, or singly and in groups, according to the inclination of the members.

Sodalities in England and elsewhere had in past years been affiliated to the Company of Jesus, and were known to the laity by the names of lay brothers, lay assistants, subseminaries and the like, whose members met together for the promotion of the aims of the society. But these sodalities were forbidden by the Pope some seventy or eighty years before this time. And I know not how to define Tresham's club in the Rue St. Martin, otherwise than to say it was an obvious imitation of the old sodalities;

albeit I have no reason to suppose that it was sanctioned by the provincial in Paris, even if he was privy to its existence, which I have never been able to ascertain. It should be said that when I first became acquainted with it, I had heard naught of the old sodalities, and in answer to my questions, Tresham told me it was not a religious sodality—nothing but a band of agents for the furtherance of good and the discomfiture of wrong-doers. And certainly, in my brief experience of the club, there seemed to be less religious converse than consumption of food and wine, while card-playing was not unknown in the place. Still, I took it on his word that I could help "Ours" by becoming a member and was nothing loath to join this club.

The members were said to be mostly English, though where the vile accents with which some of them spoke were acquired would have puzzled older and wiser heads than mine. They were all men of far greater age than I was, and I had but little intercourse with them, save at the occasional breakfast parties in the club to which Tresham was wont to bid them when he had anything to communicate of interest to them all, or when he introduced a new member. But one point stands out clearly in my memory, and I thought it then remarkable, that how intimate soever Tresham would be with the members in the club, scarce one of them ever crossed the threshold of our house in the Rue St. Louis. Whatsoever the nature of his transactions with them might be, they were all, or nearly all, carried on in the club.

It happened one forenoon at the end of May that, after delivering a letter at St. Germain, I was charged

to carry a packet to the inn at St. Cloud, and bear the quittance paper of it back to the Castle.

When I rid up to the inn, a tall, fair man of military carriage was standing outside the door; he advanced to meet me and, taking the missive from my hands with an abrupt courtesy, disappeared into the hostelry. Supposing him to be gone to sign the quittance paper, which was attached to the packet by a piece of tape, I waited a few minutes; and then, as the gentleman did not return and the morning was hot, I dismounted and backed my horse through an open wicket that led to a small parterre at the side of the house, to catch the shade. I was wondering how long I should have to attend the gentleman's pleasure when I heard voices behind my horse, and, looking round his flank, saw the military man and a companion throw themselves on a bench in the little garden.

I had not the least will to play the eavesdropper. I but wanted my piece of paper to go about my business. But I did not at once make myself known by reason of my eye being attracted, and I think fascinated, by the very large peruke worn by the second man. It was the day of large perukes; but this one, albeit not ungraceful, was very long, and the curls hung so low over the forehead, and so forward on the cheeks, that it was not possible to distinguish what seemed to be very dusky features beneath it. It was a complete disguise, and withal so artfully contrived that it appeared to fit the wearer to a nicety.

He spoke first with a voice of pleasing smoothness.

"The same answer, of course," said he. "He

asks for more time, and time is just what we cannot afford. At least, I cannot if I am to get out of this country without being discovered by the inquisitive. I would never have come had I known the business would drag like this."

"You cannot expect a straightforward answer from a man whose Scottish friends are not permitted by the Jesuits to have any say in his affairs," replied the other. "But why not return yourself, St. John, and leave me to carry on the business as best I can; there is not much hope any way."

"Because you cannot play my last card," said the first speaker. "You forget my word was passed to Harley that none but I should break the seal of the Queen's letter, which is to be your authority to deal with the Chevalier, in the last resort, if he should prove stiff-necked."

These, as nearly as I can call them to mind, were the words that passed when my horse, in kicking at a fly on his belly, struck the stirrup iron with a loud ring, and at the same moment I called out: "I should be obliged, sir, if you would return me the quittance paper for the packet I brought you just now."

"Why, whom have we here?" cried the one named St. John, who speedily turned his back on me, and entered the house through an open French window, leaving his friend to deal with the interloper.

The military man approached me with a queer look in his face which, however, expressed more of entire amazement than of anger at my intrusion. He had the packet in his hand, and from the cover still dangled the piece of paper I had waited for. I

pointed to it, saying, "You have, I think, forgot the quittance."

He followed the direction of my hand with his eyes, saw the paper, and with a "Pshaw! I beg your pardon," he turned after his friend into the house.

After an interval that must have been much longer than was needful for the signing of the paper, he returned to me through the front of the house, handed me the quittance, and asked my name, which he repeated two or three times when I had given it to him. He next inquired which road I was taking and, with a military salute, withdrew.

I had rid far that morning and, not wishing to distress my horse, took my leisure on the road back to St. Germain. I must have left the inn at St. Cloud about half an hour when I heard horses' feet galloping behind me, and likewise what I took to be a shout intended for me. Looking back, I perceived two riders with heads lowered and legs a-flap, travelling at a pace that had like to founder their nags on the hard road; and I pulled up to let them pass or speak to me if so they would. I soon saw that I was the aim of their haste, for they fell to a jog trot when I stopped, and I then recognised them for the gentlemen of the parterre at the inn. They both saluted as they came up, and the man with the long peruke, who was of younger figure than the other, drew to my side and, "We don't propose to detain you, sir," says he; "but, with your kind permission, we will accompany you on your way. I understand that I address Mr. Charles Repton, to whom I have an explanation to make, and of whom I would ask a favour."

There was something very taking, besides his smooth voice, in the manner of the man; a sort of familiar deference, if that be possible, which was quite new to me.

"You are, I think, in favour of the Chevalier, sir," he went on: "and, you will pardon me if I err, you have some undertaking with the Company of Jesus?"

"Before I answer such questions," said I, "it would not be amiss for me to know who puts them?"

"That right is acknowledged at once," says he with a short laugh: "though my impression is that I have galloped myself into a muck sweat for the very reason that you already have that information. Still you are right, sir, to chide my manners, and I should have said at first that I am Henry St. John, and this is my friend Colonel Porch. The colonel is engaged in a mission to St. Germain, the precise text of which is not now to the point, seeing that, so far, he has not sped very well with it; and I have borne him company to France to lend him a certain authority which, in a given event, he might require and without me would have lacked. It was necessary, however, in order to humour certain friends in England, that I should travel incognito; and to that end I had my face stained, and adopted this fantastic peruke, which is an incubus I shall quit with satisfaction to myself."

He was going on when I interrupted him, and, "It may save you some inconvenience," said I, "if I tell you it is none of my duty or inclination to play the spy; and since I learned your name by pure chance, I shall, of course, respect your incognito. But I

am so unused to politics that had you not followed me on the road, it is doubtful whether I should ever have connected the name I heard in the garden with Mr. Secretary St. John, to whom I make no doubt I am now speaking. Nay more, if you will think upon the matter, you will, I am sure, perceive that had I wished to make an ill use of the knowledge I gained by hazard, I should have asked for the quittance in the French, which I speak like a native. And so I might have escaped suspicion of having overheard what I should not."

"And that's very true," said Mr. St. John; "I had not thought on it before. But it only goes to show how wise I was to come after you, and stake my chances on your face. There are more ways than one of stopping a man's tongue, as I dare say you know; and in these beggarly times one may happen to give offence to a nobleman by not offering him a bribe. I do assure you, sir, that's true. But I told Mr. Porch that, though I had only seen your face for a moment, I could count on your indulgence if you knew my story."

"My friends in Paris are few," said I, "and I think I may say I have none save those who are for the Pretender's cause. For myself, as you see, I play the part of express to the Court at times, though I know none of their secrets and, if the truth be known, I am not in hot haste to learn them."

"Why there I am with you," said he. "I hardly know what made me take up with this scheme, unless it was to pleasure others; though now I am in it, we will carry it through if we can. And if we fail, why then we must even do without King James III.

It is, however, from your friends that I would ask you to keep my secret. We are all friends together, it would seem; though friends sometimes have the habit of falling out. And the colonel's mission is one that, if successful, would perhaps not have a sweet taste in the mouth of a Jesuit."

"Then you are right," said I, "not to discover it to me who am a member of the society."

"And that brings me to the question I was so rude as to put you before I had introduced myself," says he: "and though I trust your word like my own, it would be a comfort to my friends in England if I could swear my secret is in the care of one who is not forced to reveal it, in the confessional or elsewhere. For, I should say, it is to screen the knowledge of my absence from persons in England, rather than from Paris folk, that I have assumed this disguise. I am supposed to be in retirement at Windsor."

"Well, please set your mind at rest, sir," said I; "since I have done no wrong in hearing your name by chance, no power on earth can make me disclose it without your leave."

"That is what your face told me already, in the garden," said he: "and it only remains for me to thank you, and to ask your pardon for having burdened you with my affairs. The colonel here would be glad, I do believe, to have further talk with you, but, with your permission, I will return like a fox to my covert. I wish you a very good day, sir, and if you should ever need the humble offices of Henry St. John, you may command them when you will." And with a sweep of his hat this singular man

turned about, and disappeared near as quick as he came.

Colonel Porch watched him for a space, and then, addressing me as we resumed our way; "There goes perhaps the most brilliant man in Europe," says he. "Ever the same, and yet always different; ever the same St. John; but being St. John, always striving to quit the beaten track. None but he, now, would have conceived the notion of pursuing you and making a clean breast of it. Still I congratulate you, sir, on his discernment, and I doubt if your friend Mr. Francis Tresham, for example, would have had quite the same nice perception of a point of honour."

"So you know Tresham?" said I.

"Not so well as I think I know you, sir; but I have met him at the Court yonder," said he, pointing to the Castle which was now in sight.

"I hope you have no ill to say of him, sir," said I; "for he's my instructor now, and though I am not just apt to learn all he would teach me, yet he uses me well, and I should surely count him my friend."

"No, sir," said the colonel; "I have naught to say against him, though I protest I should be more at my ease in his company if he were at less pains to convince me of his friendship and support of my mission, of which, my hope is, he knows nothing. But he has used me well, too. Indeed he has invited me to a breakfast at this club, or whatever he calls it, in the Rue St. Martin: and it was on that score I have ventured to extend this intrusion. If you can find it within your moral obligations to tell me what manner of men I am like to meet there, I should be the more in your debt that I am not wishful to be

drawn into sectarian or other disputes about the errand I am on."

"I fear I cannot help you much," said I; "for I am not long a member myself. But I have Tresham's word for it that the club is not a religious sodality; and, though I have no great liking for the looks of some of the members, I accept his assurance that they are a brotherhood for the promotion of well-doing."

"They are all Jacobites, I take it?" says he.

"I am to suppose so," said I. "Otherwise it would be hard to name a common bond which would unite so many different elements as the persons of these men seem to represent. But I believe Mr. St. John alluded to your mission as something distasteful to the Jesuits; and that being so, sir, I would think it best to keep it from Tresham, and not be thwarting his politics. Though why he cannot keep politics apart from religion is more than I can say."

"The reason of that is fairly plain to me," said the colonel. "There are some folk who hold that the prince has not a beggar's chance of getting the English Crown, save by turning Protestant, while there are others of your persuasion who had rather keep him in exile than have him change his faith."

"And would it be fair to ask what is your own attitude in the matter?" said I.

"Well, now we come to the point," said he. "We'll put it this way, if you please. I confess I don't set a high value on a man who chops and changes his creed without conviction; but neither would I give a long price for the Chevalier's chances of the English throne unless he is prepared to abjure. At the same time I cannot see why he should be

ashamed of the faith of his forefathers, and of his two sisters.

"Unless," said I, "it should be from conviction."

"Quite so," said he. "And there, it seems to me, the matter should end; but I also hold that he should have a fair chance to decide for himself, without the help or interference of priests and the Queen-Mother. And who will say that he will get it?"

"Not I, for I do not know," said I; "but your remarks on a man returning to the faith of his forefathers touches me nearly; since my father was the first Catholic in my family for many generations. Still, I should hold that no good reason for changing my faith now."

"No," said the colonel; "perhaps your father brought you up in the Catholic faith. But if the Protestant clergy had had the same opportunity to convert you as the Roman priests have had to preserve you in their flock, you might even now be a Protestant. And so might the young prince there. There is much fate in these matters."

"My father died when I was very young," said I: "and he left word that he wished me to be educated for a Jesuit priest. But a year since I was found unworthy of further preparation for the priesthood in the society; and as they were loath to expel me, I was permitted to remain in the order under Mr. Tresham's guidance, and qualify myself for the position of a gentleman, until such time as I might subdue my rebellious disinclination to submit to my spiritual superiors. That is why I am now in Paris instead of St. Omer. It suits Tresham to employ

me in this fashion, and I make no complaint, so long as I am not drawn into plots, for which I have neither the taste nor the knowledge."

"Well, sir, you have placed me under a great obligation as to which I am your grateful servant," said the colonel. "I will bear in mind your counsel to avoid politics with Tresham. Still, as I am engaged to go to the club on Wednesday, I will even keep the appointment."

"If it will be the next Wednesday," said I, "I will bear you company if I can."

"I should take it kindly if you could be there to encourage me," says he; "for in truth I have no great relish for the entertainment, nor do I see much good in going to it, saving the possible hazard of disarming the suspicion of the Catholic Jacobites by showing that I, personally, have nothing to conceal. Before I go, if you will pardon the freedom, it is on my mind to say that I think you would make a better figure as a soldier than as a priest, and that I guess I can discern the cause of your rejection by the Jesuits. For my part I can wish you no better than that they may never find you less rebellious. So then, sir, till Wednesday."

We were now close to the Castle gates and, with a salute, Colonel Porch left me.

On my return to the Rue St. Louis, there was lying on the salon table a letter for me from Fr. Cornish, the seal of which had been broken. The letter was dated from Goldbetter's house in Oswestry, and the writer said he had conferred with Goldbetter on the question I had put to him of my dealings with the Jacobites. They were both of the same mind,

Fr. Cornish writ, that the matter needed careful handling; but the father added for himself that he was sure I should be safe to trust in the discretion of Tresham, who would be watchful to shield me from the snares of dangerous schemes, and to whom he would write a separate letter of warning on my account. He said nothing as to my duty to the Company of Jesus in the matter of the Chevalier's cause. And he ended by telling me the affair was not of much moment one way or the other; inasmuch as he purposed to visit Paris himself shortly, in order to lay before me a new plan for the future which, if I should fall in with it, would compel a residence of two or three years in England, where I should be cut off from active participation in Paris politics.

Tresham joined me not long after, and said he had opened my letter in mistake of one of his own. He said no word as to his knowledge of its contents, and I was left to guess whether he had received the letter Fr. Cornish had threatened to write. I did not, therefore, find it needful to discuss with him the chances and prospects of the new scheme which Fr. Cornish might have in view for me. Neither said I aught of my meeting with Colonel Porch.

As I had given my word not to disclose the identity of St. John to my friends, I thought the whole subject of the strangers were best avoided: since the mention of one might give rise to questions concerning the other. And I was sure it would cause Tresham no surprise when he should learn on Wednesday that the colonel and I were already acquainted; since he would know that I carried letters to St. Cloud as well as to other places.

CHAPTER IV

THE SODALITY

BUT when Wednesday morning came, I found I had reckoned without my host; for Tresham came to me with an urgent letter to be carried to St. Germain before noon. And when I told him I had heard there was a breakfast party at the club, which I designed to attend, he would not hear of confiding the important mission to another. I must needs, therefore, abandon my purpose to meet the colonel that morning, and be content with the hope that I might see him again and explain that my absence was none of my own choosing.

I set off in due course with the letter, and when I was come near the village of Ruell I met Mr. Murray, a young Scottish gentleman whose acquaintance I had made while waiting about at the Castle.

He hailed me with a shout and, "You are for St. Germain?" said he.

"Yes," said I, with a grin. "A most weighty despatch that none but I may deliver."

"Is that so? Well, mine will be the more important, for I come straight from the King, and was bid keep a look out for ye on the road. If we met, I was to exchange packets with ye: and this," says he, producing a letter from his holsters, "will be for Mr. Francis Tresham's ain hand. So you'll please

give me yours, and the transference of the letters will just be their ain quittances."

"This is strange," said I, "for I was told by Tresham to deliver the letter myself without fail and await the answer."

"Naething vera extraordinar," says he, in his Scots dialect. "Maybe Mr. Tresham will e'en find his answer in yon letter. But those will be my orders; and if the King canna whiles change his mind, I dinna ken wha may. It seems he will be for leaving to go to the field of war somewhat earlier than he intended; and nae doubt the letter will be to warn the Papists betimes."

There was nothing for it but to hand over my letter, and return with the other to Tresham who, I reminded myself, would now be at the club in the Rue St. Martin, whither I directed my horse so soon as I reached Paris.

The club, as I have said, consisted of two rooms opening the one into the other, and was entered customarily through the chandler's shop; but there was an exit from the place, in the further room, through a passage that gave on to a small lane or court. And to this I now went for the convenience of fastening my horse to a hook in the wall of the court. The breakfast was served in the room nearer to the shop; and when I had dismounted and entered the first room, I could, of course, hear the clatter of dishes and the voices of the eaters in the room beyond.

I did not think it proper to seek Tresham at table; so I bid an attendant tell him I waited in the other room with a letter of urgency, and I was all amaze-

ment when the man returned to say Mr. Tresham was not there, for I knew no other place where I had like to find him.

An Irishman named Whelan, who had joined the club somewhere about the same time as I, and was said to have served in the French army, now came out of the breakfast room, and told me Tresham had been called away just as they were sitting down to the meal; and had commended his guests to the care of the other members during his absence, which he hoped would not be long.

The man was less at ease than I should have supposed Tresham's bare absence would account for; and, "He was expecting me to bring him an answer to a letter I carried for him, though scarce so early as this," said I. "Still, he might have known it was possible I should be back soon. Did he leave no word where I was to seek him?"

"No, indeed," said Whelan. "I can't call to mind that he mentioned your name; and I haven't a notion more than yourself what would have fetched him away at such an unseasonable moment to all concerned."

It was surely odd, I thought, for a man to leave his guest or guests to the hospitality of strangers without strong cause: more especially a man of such punctilious ceremony as Tresham observed. But no suspicion of anything sinister arose in my mind. I made sure he must have a good reason for his defection from the board, and I got back to my horse and hastened to the Rue St. Louis, to find he had but a few minutes left the house. Supposing him to be gone back to the party, and blaming my ill-fortune

that I had not met him on the way, I returned to the club. And when I heard he had not been seen there again, I resolved to await him in the empty room, ordering a servant to bring me a plate of bread and meat, for I was hungry and knew not when I might have a chance of getting food again.

I placed the letter on the table beside me, and had been eating some short time when I became slowly aware that all was not well in the next room, the door of which stood ajar. I think what first gave me this warning impression was that the general murmur of conversation had given place to the sound of fewer voices; and these were unduly raised as though in heat. But for all that, I was hardly alarmed at first, since distance may easily pervert the tone of voices in argument to that of men in strife: and I did not catch many words in the beginning, and had not the smallest preconception of a disturbing element amongst the feasters.

But I was alive, at last, to the serious nature of the dispute by hearing a loud crash as of a fist brought with force upon the table, setting the furniture of it a-jingle, while a voice unknown to me shouted, "Damnation, sir, will you give a straight answer to a proper question?"

At this time, be it understood, I knew nothing more than I have here set down; but I heard later that the noisy part of the quarrel began by one of Tresham's guests (for it seems he had two there, besides Colonel Porch) hinting that the subject of the colonel's mission to St. Germain could not be agreeable to the Paris Englishmen by reason of his extreme reluctance to discuss it with them. And when Porch replied

that he was but an emissary, and could scarce discuss the intentions of his principals in public, there was a murmur of disapproval. The man, whose name was Despard (the other guest being one Tracey), went on to say that to support any scheme for the restoration of James, which might not be approved by Queen Mary (the Chevalier's mother) and the Catholics at Court, was a dishonourable action, and those who did so were nothing but spies.

To which Colonel Porch replied: "I take exception, sir, to your use of the word 'spy' in my presence."

Whereupon Despard, who was supported by the approving murmurs and ejaculations of Tracey and of many who sat near him, said: "The word is well chosen to describe those who go about a public business in a clandestine fashion: who pretend to share the aims of their fellow countrymen, while all the time they are deluding them for their own selfish ends, and who act in concert with agents in disguise and hiding in a country where no disguise nor concealment should be needful to a true Jacobite."

"I can no longer pretend to doubt, sir, that you allude to me and the gentleman at the inn of St. Cloud," said the colonel. "His disguise may or may not have been wisely assumed. It is a point I am not prepared to argue just now: and I should remind you that it may have been for a purpose quite other than you suppose; and that not all the Jacobites in England nor in France are of the Catholic faith. But if you knew the man and his warrant for crossing the water, a spy would be your last name for him."

"Then tell us his name," said Despard, "and remove at once the suspicion."

"I am not at liberty to name him in public, sir," said Colonel Porch.

"Well, name him to me in private," said Despard. "I will give my word never to discover it. I will but assure the company that I am satisfied, and I make no doubt they will be content to accept my judgment in the matter."

"I think you forget, sir," said the colonel, after a pause during which the others signified their confirmation of Despard's offer, "that I have had the honour of your acquaintance for not more than an hour or so: indeed, it comes to me that I do not even call to mind your name, if I ever heard it. And it is possible that you might not be satisfied if I disclosed the secret."

It was then that the other man, Tracey, chimed in by bringing his fist down on the table, and bawling out the question which awoke me to an acute perception of the occasion; though you are to bear in mind that I was yet in ignorance of the cause of the quarrel, or, indeed, that Colonel Porch was concerned in it.

I think most persons will agree with me that there is something quite fearful to a lad who assists, for the first time, at the strife of grown men. It takes him some time to conceive that they can be in earnest: and when he, at last, does so, the consequences seem to him (as indeed they are) out of all proportion more serious than those which result from the quarrels of youth. Those, at least, were my feelings, and I was now seized with a great terror and commotion which

afflicted me so seriously that I stopped eating; the better, I must suppose, to observe the coming storm. It was the colonel's voice I heard next, and that told me he was in the dispute: "I deny your right to put any questions to me, proper or improper," says he, "and what is more, I decline to submit to an inquisition of my friend's affairs. I have already told you that my companion at the inn is no spy: a piece of information that, in my opinion, should have been superfluous in a conversation amongst gentlemen."

The Irishman, Whelan, then intervened with: "And I'm inclined to agree with ye, sir, that the word 'spy' should not have arisen in a society of gentlemen without grave provocation. But if ye'll kindly overlook that irregularity for the nonce, perhaps ye might still see your way to allay the suspicions of those who are belike as zealous in this cause as yourself?"

Before Porch replied, Despard again rushed into the fight, and: "I called no man a spy without provocation," says he. "Colonel Porch resents the name as applied to those who lie under a warranted suspicion: and if he mislikes the term, he has a simple remedy at hand that will satisfy ——"

"I have no kind of doubt in me mind," broke in Whelan again, "that the colonel will be most pleased to satisfy ye at yer own time and place, Mr.—Despard I think yer name is; but the question for the moment is ——"

"But I want satisfaction, too," says Tracey. "And I:" "and I too:" added some of the others.

I heard a chair pushed back, and I thought Colonel

Porch rose to his feet. He spoke slow and calm, though it came to me on a sudden in the empty chamber by myself, that it was the calmness of despair, and that the man knew himself to be in deadly peril. But for all that, the voice had a melody of courage in it and, such is the spiritual force of a brave man's example, it drove the terror from my own young vitals like smoke before a strong wind.

"Am I to fight the whole chamberful of you?" said he. "Well then, give me a corner to myself and I'll try. Or is it massacre you want? Why, what sort of bloody rat-trap is this? I am bidden to a friendly party, forsooth: my host absents himself conveniently, just as we are about to sit at table, and the lad Charles Repton, who knows the truth about my friend, is spirited away at the right moment. Spies! I give you the word back in all your faces. You set a watch on a harmless man that has not twice seen the outside of his hostelry. You are the spies, else how should you know anything of him? But do your worst, and make an end of it. If I am to be killed for convenience' sake, some of you, I hope, will get your deserts for trying to hector and bait a gentleman, and put him in the wrong of it for your own ends."

It takes me much time to put all this in plain English, and longer still to write it, sith I have lost the use of a thumb. But you are to understand that the whole quarrel lasted scarce a few minutes; and if it should appear slow to you, the fault lies in the telling of it.

While Colonel Porch was speaking there flashed

through my brain near all the events of the few days last past: and standing out clear against the rest were three facts which my mind's eye dwelt upon with a sure conviction. First, that I had been, of set purpose, given work to do at the time of the breakfast, so that my truthful testimony should be lacking if needed, and, but for an accident, I should not now be at the club. Second, that St. John, who had till lately been Secretary at War to Queen Anne, could be no spy in a proper sense, with a letter of the Queen in his pocket, as the saying is. And third, that, spy or no spy, it was my plain duty to support Colonel Porch who, had I given him one word of warning, would have avoided the club like a wasps' nest, no doubt. Shame seemed to me the least evil that should haunt a man who would hold back now; and, moreover, I still supposed there was time to keep the peace if I showed myself, and spoke for the colonel's friend.

So, commending myself to God, I ran to the door as he was saying "Stay! Is there no one honest man among these craven curs who will see fair play, and keep off more than two of you at a time?"

I found every man on his feet in the breakfast chamber, and Colonel Porch was edging towards the corner nearest, on my left hand, to the door by which I entered, where was space to swing a cat. Whelan, with a yell that was like some wild war cry, rushed from the far side of the table: scattered all before him till he reached the colonel's side, when, facing about, he drew his sword and, "Sure and there's one man that'll not stand by and see a gentleman hounded to his death," said he. "To hell with

Jacobite plots, say I, if cold murder is to be the game on the table."

In a second the room was in an uproar, and to my timid vision it was a sea of naked sword blades. I drew mine, from brute instinct, I must think, since I had no appetite to use it. But, seeing two or three men engaging Colonel Porch and the Irishman, I made for the spot and beat up their weapons the best I could, though not before Whelan had dropped a man and other assailants began to press the pair.

My voice sounded to me weak and hoarse as I shouted, "I can answer for Colonel Porch's friend at St. Cloud."

A slight pause in the strife followed: and it looked for a few seconds as if peace might yet be restored. I heard some words of approval, so that they could not all have been assassins, and one voice cried, "That is all we want, is it not?" But almost immediately after another man called out: "He's only another whelp of the same litter. I have heard him say he cares nothing for King James, and he's been seen in the company of the suspect. Have at the young spy too."

The speaker, whom I hardly knew, and another man then attacked me with their swords in so great a fury that I was forced to fall back towards the door by which I had entered. The Irishman, who was betwixt me and Colonel Porch, seeing I was being separated from the other two, closed in to his right, and was followed by the colonel; so that in a few seconds we were all three fighting side by side with our backs to the door of the empty room. As the two others drew in towards me they, with their

assailants, narrowed the front of my engagement; and when I had disabled one of my antagonists there was scarce room for another man to take his place.

I could not say I saw them except through the corner of my eye, as the phrase is, but two more men went down before Porch and Whelan; and still there seemed no lack of swordsmen coming on against them. Though it is possible that some were a hindrance to others in the proper use of their arms; while we defenders of the door were happily able to keep the precise intervals we desired between us. At length a warm trickle, which I knew at once was not sweat, ran down my left ear and on to my cheek, hardening as it went. I thought at first I must be wounded; but all fear was now vanished from my soul; and in place thereof there came to me a deafness to the noise around that was not unpleasing, and brought with it a sort of calculating determination to be quit of this hateful business with the least injury to myself and friends.

I soon perceived that the blood on my cheek must have come from the gallant Irishman, who was hit in the neck. Still he did not fall, and would seem to have been as fresh as ever, when he presently whispered: "Do ye slip through the door while we cover ye; and then be ready to stop the first man that tries to follow us when we get through after ye."

I understood his meaning but, though there was only room now for one man against me, I was too hard pressed by this man to carry out the manœuvre, which required an extreme watchfulness. But a little later I had the good fortune to bind his blade and send his sword flying over his head till it struck

a hanging glass lustre with a crash that added to the confusion of our enemies. It is a silly trick, I was told, and not to be thought of in war, where men have their sword-hilts attached to the wrist; and certainly we were not encouraged to practise it at Lagaraye's Academy. Still, it served my turn at this pinch, and I slipped through the door like a flash, standing on one side, ready to attack in flank whomsoever should follow my two friends.

But it seemed to me half a life-time before the others fell back after me, and I think they had some sort of silent dispute as to which one should lead the way. In the end it was the colonel who came next, and took his post on the opposite side of the door to me. By the time Whelan got through there was nothing left for me or Mr. Porch to do, since our enemies had to all appearance had enough of fighting for the moment. Two men, it is true, made a few offers to pass the door; but whether it was that each one suspected the other might not support him if he took the first steps to cross the threshold, or that both lacked the needful endurance to hazard such an inconvenient passage, they soon drew back, and ranged themselves with the others. Still, we expected there might be a rush at any moment, and we all three stood facing the door on guard.

While we were so standing, I said to Colonel Porch, "There is no fear that they will try to take us in rear, since they durst not show themselves in a body in broad daylight on the public street. But you will find a passage through the other door behind you that will take you on to a court where my horse is. Mount the beast and fly."

"And what do I want a horse for," said he, very calm; "you cannot surely think it possible I would care to save my skin at the expense of the lives of my two protectors": and his words were like the music of running water in my young and grateful ears.

"The young man is in the right, whatever," said the Irishman. "My name is James Whelan, at your service, and 'twould be pleasing me beyond words, sir, if you would just be off and show them a clean pair of heels; while Mr. Repton and I hold them in play at this door, through which they show but a qualified zeal to pass."

"Not I," said the other: "I owe you too much already. Why, I should have been carrion by this, I doubt, but for you gentlemen and your extraordinary skill with your weapons. I scarce know which to admire most: and I have had a lesson in generosity to-day that I hope I shan't forget. But in fact I think we shall none of us be further molested by these cut-throats." And he dropped the point of his sword, and drew out a kerchief to mop his face withal.

It was now, indeed, plain to see that the fighting was over for the day. Some of our enemies were seeing to their wounds, while others, possibly glad of the excuse to quit the inconvenient neighbourhood of the door, were assisting to remove and examine the fallen men, of whom there were at least three. I called out several times to ask where Tresham was, and at last an answer came, with many oaths, that he was not returned. There was no use in tarrying where we were until it should pleasure

this gentleman to come back and explain that which could by no means be explained, save as a deliberate attempt at murder, under the cloak of a political quarrel. We therefore walked slowly backward, with our swords yet drawn, until we reached the passage door and were quickly in the court without.

Here nothing would persuade Colonel Porch to take my horse, though I assured him I had no present use for it myself. "I will just hail a coach when I reach a thoroughfare," said he; "but not before I have tried to thank you for your handsome and unexpected protection. I protest that I must beg you, gentlemen, to tell me if I can do anything to show my gratitude, and also whether you run into any danger yourselves for having befriended me thus?"

"For my own part I want no thanks," said Whelan. "Indeed, colonel, 'tis yourself I would be thanking for giving me as pretty a fight as I have had, I think, since Ramillies, where I had the misfortune to be wounded so severely ——"

"Why, man, you're badly wounded now," said Porch, who proceeded to untie the Irishman's neckcloth, which was soaking in blood, as likewise were the neck-piece and shoulders of his coat.

"'Tis but a scratch, as the saying is," said the lighthearted fellow: "though, to be sure, 'tis not so far from the spot that would have been letting more blood than I can well spare. Think no more of it, sir, I do beseech ye."

But he suffered us to bind the wound, nevertheless, and he promised Porch he would take himself to a surgeon and get it properly dressed without delay.

I now remembered I had left the letter for Tresham lying on the table in the near room, and, though I knew full well the man had forfeited my consideration, I could not bring myself to leave it to the good faith of any who might chance to find it. So I told the other two I would not detain them a minute while I ran back to the empty room to fetch it. But Colonel Porch placed himself between me and the open door of the passage, saying: "You won't return without me: and if you'll take my counsel you'll just let Mr. Francis Tresham find his own letters and carry no more for him yourself."

"And that's the counsel I would be after giving myself," said Whelan. "Faith, and he'd be an exacting correspondent that would be expecting the delivery of his letters at the club this afternoon. But if it is a point of honour with Mr. Repton to get back the letter, why he and I will soon fetch it."

"I think, with your permission, I must have it back," said I.

"Then we'll all go together," said Mr. Porch.

"Now this beats all I ever heard," said Whelan. "Can you not perceive, sir, that it is stark madness for you to go back and provoke those pole-cats again? For us 'tis as safe as the inside of a church, because they have no quarrel with Mr. Repton and myself, saving the baulking them of bald assassination. And, if I understand the beasts, they will keep their revenge till they find us separated again. I can't myself say for certain how many of them I have accounted for, but Mr. Repton passed his tool through one man's sword arm in such an efficient manner that I can wager he won't want to draw his

weapon again for many a day. And as for that disarming trick, faith I never saw the thing done prettier. "Why," says he, turning to me, "ye must have a wrist like beaten iron; and a better advertisement to be left alone in the future ye could not have. But for the colonel to go back with us now would be to stir up the whole ——"

"All the same I'm not going to turn my back on them," said Porch; "and if you two go, I'll go too."

"Then if nothing else will dissuade ye, I must tell ye all I know, and how 'tis that your presence will provoke more fighting," said the Irishman. "I was invited to join this party (though not by Tresham himself, mind ye), with a hint that there might be trouble on the account of a spy who would be present, and was to be made discover his business in France, and that of a disguised companion of his. And thinking it would be merely a matter of exposing the gentleman, or crossing blades with him if he was reluctant to be exposed, I accepted the bidding. I tell ye I was something discomposed when Tresham withdrew himself as we were sitting down: and, oh, but he's a deep villain. But when I perceived, as soon as ye did yourself, that naked assassination was the countersign of the undertaking, I took the only course possible to a gentleman of any honour. But it's your life they want, colonel, and Tresham has bid them take it, or meet his displeasure, as sure as me name's James Whelan. This is now as clear to me as daylight. And if at any future time ye should have occasion to call to mind Tresham's 'soodaality,' my dear colonel, will ye please remember there

were two honest men who had been cajoled into membership?"

"Aye! that I will," said Porch; "and if you will but come and see me at St. Cloud, before we leave, I think I can introduce you to my friend, and satisfy you that there is nothing in my business here to be ashamed of."

"There needs no satisfaction," said Whelan. "I saw from the beginning of the quarrel that ye were but an emissary; and 'twas the finding out they knew it too that told me murder was their game."

Our dispute was at last settled by the plan that Whelan and I were to return to get the letter while Porch waited in the passage; and it was agreed that he was only to enter if we called for help.

The first room was thronged when we entered it, and a sickening view met my unaccustomed eyes as soon as I perceived the reason why our enemies had forsaken the breakfast chamber. The books on war tell us the particulars of the fighting in an engagement, but not a word, so far as I knew, of the ghastly work that awaits those whose duty it is to search for the wounded and separate them from the dead, to tend their hurts when the strife is over, and help the surgeon in his bloody toil. And here, on the very table at which I had lately eat, were laid the bodies of three men, while seated on a chair and stripped to the waist was the man whose arm my sword had pierced. I thanked God from my heart that I had only to answer for the wounded arm in place of the more serious, if not deadly, hurts of the other three. But it was a poor consolation: and it was all I could

do to keep back the tears that were striving for mastery over my youth and innocence.

I could see nothing of the letter; but as I raised my eyes from scanning the table and its shocking burden, I saw Tresham enter from the other chamber. I did not think he observed me; but he glanced at the table, and his face was so distorted with a violent passion that I scarce knew him for the same man. Almost at the same time there was a slight movement behind me, as I still walked beside Whelan; I felt a blow between the shoulder blades, as though I had been struck by a hot iron whip; a shower of sparks came into my eyes, blotting out the scene in front, and I lost consciousness.

CHAPTER V

BROMLEY CHASE

FROM Paris to Bromley Chase, near the little town of Church Stretton, in the county of Salop, is a long way by divers modes of conveyance, no matter what way the traveller takes; but, in order to save you time and trouble, I shall invite you now to make the journey by a shorter route than that by which I travelled, and to conjecture it finished.

To this end you should figure to yourselves a square red brick building, faced with freestone, about eighty years old, and situate on rising ground some half a league to the east of the high road from Hereford to Shrewsbury.

The place is not large, neither would one call it small, even in these days of high mansions. There is plenty of space in it for a considerable household, and some of the rooms are wide and richly ornamented with oak wainscot and carving. Altogether it may be described as a suitable place for a country gentleman of moderate fortune. There are high walled gardens so adjacent to the house that one may walk in shelter and, if there should be sun, in warmth about the place on the coldest day of winter. The land round the house drains itself into a winding stream which intersects the property and holds some fat yellow-bellied trout, that are as pleasing to the palate when served on the table as the sport of

getting them there from the river is healthful and relaxing to body and mind.

The inmates of the place were of the Catholic persuasion; but before I proceed to describe them, it is needful to return once more to Paris for a brief space in order to explain how it was I came to be a guest in the house.

After I had been stabbed at the club in a fit of revenge, it is supposed, by the man I had disarmed earlier in the afternoon, I was carried by Tresham's orders to the house in the Rue St. Louis; and thence, a day or two after, when Fr. Cornish arrived in Paris, to the infirmary of the Jesuits' College in the Rue St. Antoine. I was nursed by the father night and day, assisted as he was by a clever young French surgeon who, it seems, was throughout hopeful that, owing to my youth and good health, I should in time recover from the hurt. But it was a long time; indeed, I could not be said to have regained consciousness till I had been in bed at the college many days: and newly aroused consciousness is somewhat slow to develop its full functions, and is apt to frequent relapses.

As soon, however, as I found myself in complete possession of my understanding, I was eager to get information of all the events that occurred during my temporary absence from the world of reason, as well as the issues of some that took place before I was unconscious. But for a long time I found that my questions were met by evasive answers, and sometimes they were not answered at all on the plea that talking had like to fatigue me; and it were better for me to try to get more sleep.

As I grew stronger, my impatience waxed to the extent, I must suppose, that Fr. Cornish perceived I would not long continue to brook evasion. And little by little I was made aware that my wound was got in a quarrel of which none knew the cause and origin, or anything precise, before the finding of my body by Tresham in the court behind the club.

It was in vain I insisted that I had been stabbed in the back at Tresham's club by one of his friends, and that he was present to see the deed done. I could not convince the father, and I could see him smile sadly and shake his head, as who should say, the patient must be humoured, of course, while his fancy wanders. For many a long day he was deluded by Tresham into believing my hurt was received in a low tavern brawl, and that those who gave it to me dragged my senseless body, by open day, through the streets of Paris, to the neighbourhood of the club.

If it should be asked why he was not undeceived by Colonel Porch or the Irishman, who came, I was told, daily and sometimes oftener to the college to enquire of me, it is to be remembered that the father scarce left my bedside for a month, and held no private talk with either of them. And before I was strong enough to see a visitor, they had both left Paris.

I may mention here that I never saw Whelan again. I heard afterwards from Porch that he at once despatched the man who had tried to murder me, and there was no further violence that afternoon: Tresham being instant in profuse regrets that a quarrel should have arisen between his guests during his absence from the club. My two friends, however,

refused to quit me in spite of his assurances, until I was in my bed in Tresham's house, and a surgeon had been called. Whelan soon afterwards rejoined the army of Vendôme and was killed, fighting like the brave man he was, at the battle of Oudenarde.

That the services of such men should be lost to the State that bred them, and that he should have died fighting against his own countrymen, go to show how hostile to her own interests the politics of England can be.

Of Colonel Porch I shall have more to say anon. He left Paris with his mission unaccomplished, because the Chevalier, or maybe his mother and the Jesuits around him, refused to consider any proposals for his restoration that should restrict him in the choice of his friends and counsellors, or foreshowed an expectation that he might eventually abjure his faith.

When Mr. St. John quitted France with the colonel, he left a letter for me at the college which was the first reading I was permitted in bed: and very comfortable reading it was to a young man who could hitherto count but few friends for whom he had much respect or esteem. The writer assured me of his lasting gratitude for my services to his friend Porch, and insisted on my renewing my friendship with both, whensoever I should chance to find myself in England: and you shall read, if you follow me, that I availed myself later of this invitation.

With Tresham I refused to have any further traffic, although, by reason of what I have already told you, neither Cornish nor the provincial in Paris could be made to believe that he had done any wrong. They

supposed that my violent repugnance to the man was the result of a delusion begotten of my accident and grave illness: and I soon ceased to reason with them on the matter. He was brought to my room once, at his own urgent request, and I was aroused from slumber by the words "My dear Charles," and "My dear sir"; but I merely turned round in my bed to give him my back, and not long after he desisted and went away. The presence of the man raised a nausea within me that I would not try to overcome; and it seemed to me that Fr. Cornish kept him away in order that my recovery should not be hindered or delayed by his company.

The hatred I now bore to my former friend and guide caused me to view in a favourable light the immediate prospect of quitting Paris, when I should be sufficiently recovered to undertake the journey to England. And it was for this reason that I fell in the readier with a proposal which did not otherwise attract my inclinations at the outset. The plan of Fr. Cornish, in brief, contained an invitation that I should pass a couple of years at Bromley Chase and, in consideration of my entertainment there, take upon myself the instruction of my host's son, a lad of under twelve years of age.

I have said that the proposal was not entirely attractive; but I should perhaps explain that it would place me in no position of dependence in the house: for, apart from my taking no salary, there were always very serious difficulties in the way of finishing the education of Catholic boys in England. So that the rendering of such service would be rather to lay the master of the house under a great obligation,

than to yield him any control over the will and actions of the instructor. It is right that I should tell you this, lest by chance you might suppose that blame attached to my guardians for permitting the offer to be made. And if you shall add to these considerations the one impressed upon me by Fr. Cornish, and later by the provincial of Paris, that I should be furthering the aims of the Company of Jesus, you shall hardly be surprised that I accepted the invitation, and went to Bromley Chase.

The household consisted of Mr. Lucas Selby, his wife, who was of French birth, and three children, of whom my charge, Oliver, was by five or six years the youngest. The daughters were Joan, who was about eighteen years of age, and Edith, some twelve months younger.

I think that Lucas Selby never had any great love of me, and that he resented from the outset, not so much my presence in the house as, the necessity of enduring any one to come between him and his son, of whom he was extravagantly proud. That he perceived the necessity, however, there seemed to be no doubt, since he often regretted frankly his own lack of education, which was indeed palpable, and made frequent maladroit attempts to ascertain the progress of Oliver in subjects of which he himself was wofully ignorant. He was grateful to me, I think, after his manner, but he was sore jealous lest he might lose the boy's love amidst his learning. He was a man of somewhat violent passion, yet kind withal: and I am convinced that he endeavoured to be just in his dealings with all mankind. He seemed, however, to suffer from a spirit of discontent

with his surroundings that was largely engendered, no doubt, by disappointment that as the reign of the Queen went on, scarce any of the penal laws against Catholics, nor yet their civil disabilities, were modified. Albeit active persecution, except in London, Westminster, and a few other places, was now almost a thing of the past. His discontent was much outspoken before the members of his family: and it seemed to me that Bromley Chase was sadly lacking in the contented cheerfulness that lived in my recollections of Carlton House.

Otherwise Mr. Selby had much in common with my remembrance of Mr. Oswald. He was a good horseman to foxhounds, was fond of all sports, and could shoot sitting and flying with a certainty I have seldom seen the equal of.

Mrs. Selby was a kindly lady, much afflicted with delicate health, who made me most welcome, in part, I think, because she was wishful that her son should not be behind his age in learning, by reason of his religion, and in part on the account of my knowledge of the country of her birth, of which we often talked together, and sometimes in her own language.

Of the daughters, for some months, I saw not a great deal, save at meals. They were both well-favoured maids, who shared their father's love of the sports of the field, and followed him a'hunting when the season came round for that exercise, as you shall hear. But at first I was much engaged in framing a course of study which should be suitable to the intelligence of my pupil, without giving him a distaste for learning, and at the same time

should be so diverse that both pupil and instructor might have profit of it. For you are not to suppose that, albeit I was well grounded in arts, I had had a complete education at St. Omer.

I had the use of two horses, and I likewise learned to shoot, and to catch trout with the angle rod and fly, so that my leisure was spent in the pastimes I have always loved best: and if I was not extremely happy at Bromley Chase, I was at least more than content with my change of life from Paris.

Goldbetter had, soon after my arrival, urged me to visit him and learn how my affairs under his economy were going on. So I took an occasion, when I had been some months in my new home, to ride over to Owestry and lodge a few days with him.

I rid through Shrewsbury and tarried on the road when I came to Felton, to have a look round at my property and to try, but without success, to see if the scenes of my infancy would call to mind any events associated with them. I could remember nothing save what I have already told you concerning my mother: and it was a sentiment of loneliness rather than of actual loss that sent me on my further way to Oswestry.

The worthy attorney seemed not a day older than when I had last met him. His round, youthful face still looked to be struggling to suppress his mirth; but he greeted me with a warmth that went far to dispel the lonely feeling I have spoken of, and he gave me to know very soon that his welcome was no empty courtesy.

We talked no business until the second day, when,

at a small, but choice, dinner after his own heart, he opened on my affairs.

"You show no impatience, Mr. Charles," said he, "to hear an account of your estate."

"No," said I: "I am quite content to leave it all in your hands until the appointed time; though I did have the curiosity to look about at Felton yesterday on my way here, and I perceived the place is well cared for."

"That is so," he replied: "and I am quite satisfied with the tenants. But, dear me, there is a heap of money saved, and you are like to be a rich man before long. I have bought some good lots of land with part of the savings; but there is not much land for sale in these parts at the present time, and the rest is lodged, near all, in your father's bank at Shrewsbury, where they allow a good per cent. But may we not hope, now you are in England again, to see you settle yourself at Felton before many years are gone?"

"I am afraid that can never be, Goldbetter," said I.

"And may I ask why not, Mr. Charles?" says he. "You may yet be working for the Jesuits: and, in reason, you might continue to favour them; but I understand from Cornish that you cease to belong in due form to the society. At least he said you were bound by no vows."

"He is in the right when he says I have made no vows," said I: "though he can scarce have meant you to suppose I am no longer in the company. I have not been told by any that I cease to belong to it. I put it to you, Goldbetter, that if you had undertaken to carry out certain lawyer's work, you would not

shrink from that work hereafter merely by reason of your having omitted to make vows on the matter to your client. Well, that is somewhat in the nature of my case."

"But, any way, you are not entering the priesthood?" says he.

"Not at present," said I, "because they look upon me as unworthy for the moment; though I doubt they will hold me more unworthy still if Tresham's story goes further than the provincial's ears." And I told him all you know about the fight at the club, of Tresham's version of it to the two Jesuit fathers, and of their belief in his story.

"Tut, tut, tut: this is very bad," says he: "worse than anything I ever heard. Cornish sent me word by post that you were grievously wounded and like to die, last June; but I soon got news from him that you were on the fair way to recovery, and would set out for England so soon as you could travel. I understand now the reason of his reticence as to the cause of the injury; but from what he writ, I thought then the wound was got in a duel. I refrained from mention of the matter till you yourself should touch on it, lest I should seem to intrude in your private affairs. I must get to see Cornish and tell him you will have no more to do with this Tresham, whose tutelage I somehow always mistrusted. But what was I to do? I have no power, save to keep your land away from them; and Paris seemed to me better than the priesthood that you had not the qualities for. But this club or sodality: did they make no further enquiry into it, think you, when you said you had been stabbed there?"

"As they would not believe my story," said I, "it is not to be thought they suspected any ill of the place. I have told you that I scarce ever met any of the members outside the club; so it is difficult to perceive how they would get at the truth."

"Well then, Mr. Charles, it comes to this," said Goldbetter; "if they were so poorly acquainted with Tresham and his doings before they put you in his charge, they are not themselves fit to have the care of a young gentleman."

"I have had the same thought sometimes. Indeed, I thought of many things when I lay on my bed in the infirmary," said I; "but one must not judge them hardly, Goldbetter. Remember I gave them much pain at St. Omer: and in place of expelling me, they made me the offer to live with this man, which I gladly accepted. I found Tresham out but through a hazard; an exchange of letters which he had not foreseen. We should, I think, give them time to do likewise: and they seldom see him, I do suppose."

"And what position does he hold in the society?" says Goldbetter.

"That is more than I can tell you," I replied. "There are times when he calls himself a temporal coadjutor, and there are times when he says he is but an humble agent in the service of God and the Company of Jesus. But he most ways speaks of 'Ours' as though he belonged to us." And I then instructed the lawyer in the divers grades of the order as I have given them to you in my account of the life at St. Omer.

"If I may ask it with respect," says he: "what is your own grade in the society?"

"There you puzzle me, too, somewhat," said I, after some hesitation. "Belike Fr. Cornish has told you about it?"

"He was by the way of explaining the position precisely," says Goldbetter; "though I was no whit wiser at the end than at the beginning of his discourse, bating that you had made no vows. And that is why I said, but now, I understood you had ceased to belong, in due form, to the society. But it would seem you are in much the same bewilderment as I am."

"I was given to think by the provincial that I was to be a temporal coadjutor not professed of vows," said I. "Now you come to examine me, however, I cannot call to mind that he actually used the word 'coadjutor' at all, though Tresham frequently spoke of me as such. The point did not claim much of my thought, since I conceived the employment offered to me to be in the nature of an indulgence, in place of expulsion for my disobedience."

"Have you never thought there was a design to keep you at work in the society until such time as you shall have control over your fortune?" says he.

"Yes: I have once had that thought, too, since my illness," said I; "but I put it from me as an unworthy suspicion where Fr. Cornish is concerned. The man is a saint, Goldbetter, and you do him a grave wrong if you think ill of him."

"But, sir, can you not perceive," he cried, "that your friend may be but a tool in their hands, and that he is pulled from two ways at the same time:

namely his duty to you and your father's memory, and his allegiance to the order? Nay: have you not observed that he is a miserable man, and has been, ever since you quitted St. Omer?"

"I have marked a change in him of late," said I. "But he is growing old now, and his restless life may be making demands which his frame cannot support. But you would scarce have called him a tool had you been by when he was so particular to inform the provincial (who had not his lesson well by heart at our first meeting) of the true reason why I had made no vows of poverty. Indeed, if my memory serves, he introduced your views into his argument."

"Yes," says Goldbetter; "I told him what the English law might be as to the transfer of your property to a religious order, by virtue of vows made during your nonage, and while you were presumably under the influence of spiritual masters. I mean that the fact of the vows having been made while you were under age in a seminary might well form an excuse for later interference by the law, even when you shall be your own master in the eye of the law."

"He did not put the matter in those very words," said I, "though the meaning was, I think, the same. And he was at pains to show that the vows were not withheld from motives of delicacy on the part of the order. But, so far as I can see for the moment, you must rest assured that I shall consider myself a member of it until I shall be discharged."

Goldbetter was silent for a long time and then: "There are happily some years yet before you come of age," said he, "and in the meanwhile your devotion to what you hold to be a sacred duty does

you much credit and puts to shame those who have handled you so ill. But at least I am free to wish with all my heart that, either a period may soon be put to this uncertainty or you may get an early discharge from the society."

We walked to Felton the next forenoon and Goldbetter showed me the land he had bought out of his savings: and told me much more of his economies. On the way of our return to Oswestry he went back again to the subject of Tresham, and, among other questions, he asked me if I knew aught of his birth and upbringing, and whether he had been for long an agent of the Jesuits.

"I know no more of the man than I have already told you," said I.

"These agents," says he, "are not easy to comprehend, unless one shall incline to the belief that they are a sort of fanatics for the supremacy of the order. They would seem to be at the root of more than half the ill the Jesuits are said to do; and much of the jealousy of the secular Catholic priests is due to their work. 'Tis strange that the society cannot perceive where their true enemies are. But you are done with the man now, and you will scarce be drawn into Jacobite plots at Bromley Chase, which is one reason why I reluctantly favoured your going there."

"Fr. Cornish told me in Paris," I cried, in amazement, "that you approved the plan!"

"Why yes," said Goldbetter, "'tis true I did not long oppose it: since I conceived it to be the lesser of two evils, and I wanted you to be quit of the Jacobites in France at well-nigh any cost. But, for all your notion that Cornish believes in Tresham's integrity,

it seemed to me that he was as much bent on getting you away from the man as I was. I did not lean towards the scheme of your holding a dependent position in any man's house, till he assured me it was a matter of no uncommon arrangement among Catholic families in England: and the position would be rather that of a benefactor than of a dependant. But since then I have been at some trouble to learn the history of your host and his family: and they surely do not seem to favour the Jacobites."

"I do not call to mind that Mr. Selby ever spoke to me of them," said I.

"No," said Goldbetter; "but for all that I am not easy in my mind that you might not be better placed; for there is a rumour abroad that he contemplates taking a step which might make your presence in his house awkward for you both, and would surely be exceeding unpleasant hearing for the Jesuits."

"And what is that?" said I.

"Well, in short, the man may turn Protestant at any moment," says he. "And I cannot but suppose some suspicion of this must have reached the Jesuits: hence their solicitude to get an instructor of their own way of thinking for the boy. But to make all this clear to you," he added, "perhaps I should let you have the results of my enquiries, which can be reckoned on as correct." And drawing a paper from his pocket, he read somewhat as follows:—"'The Selbys are a Catholic family settled for some generations at Bromley Chase, of which they hold the fee simple. They have suffered more or less since the reign of Queen Mary the varying degrees of oppression

to which adherents to that faith have been subject. In 1687, when the fortunes of the Catholic families in England were exceeding prosperous under James II., Lucas Selby, the present owner of the estates, married one Julie de l'Amirot, a foreign lady of noble birth, who was heiress in her own right to a large landed estate near Montpelier in France, and whose family were connected with the Society of Jesus. Two daughters and a son, Oliver, the youngest, were born to this union which, after the revolution of 1688—9, suffered the discomforts that followed a rigorous reinforcement of the penal laws against Papists. Oliver was born in 1698, and when he was but three years old there was passed that Act (William III., 4—30—2), the provisions of which I had been at much pains to have set aside in the case of Mr. Charles Repton: namely, that the heirs to estates in England must turn Protestant before eighteen years of age under pain of forfeiting their property. And now a strange situation arises. If Oliver Selby turns Protestant in order to succeed his father in the possession of Bromley Chase, he will most certainly forfeit the Montpelier estate, which would escheat to the French Crown, and the Church would have none of it. There is no manner of question on this point, at least, so long as Louis XIV. continues to persecute the unfortunate Protestants in France.'"

Goldbetter ceased reading, and: "You see now, Mr. Charles, how the land lies," said he: "and in what an inconvenient situation you might find yourself withal."

"The information may be quite correct," said I, "and it would, of course, be most distressing to the

Jesuits to lose a member of the faith, bound to them, too, by marriage ties. But I fail to see how it would concern me and my position in the house. When Mr. Selby wants rid of me I suppose he will say so; and, after all, I am not put there to spy and report on his doings."

"I should be the last to suggest it," says he; "but I am a hard man of the world, Mr. Charles, and my experience tells me it is quite conceivable that the Jesuits may think they can use you for such a purpose. It is possible, also, that Mr. Lucas Selby may be of the same opinion, in which case your relations with him are like to be uncomfortable." "You see it is this way," he went on. "Many Catholic landowners have been holding on in the hope that the Queen, now that the country is in a settled state, would strive to get them some relief from the oppressive penal laws. But as time goes on and nothing is done to help them, they are almost in despair: and they are being driven, you may say, to secure their properties to their children by subscribing to the Oath and the Test Act. It is all done very quiet. Nothing is known in the neighbourhood, it maybe, till one fair morning the squire rides in to the county town, and the whole form of subscription is done in a few minutes: the only other obligation being that the subscriber must take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England within three months. He is then a free man, and fit for appointment on the Commission of the Peace, and the terror that he may lose his lands is allayed once for all. The secular Catholic clergy do the best they can to prevent this change, and in many cases they are

successful. But when it is known that a family is under the influence of a Jesuit father, they are prone to resent what is to them an interference with their cure, and not seldom they neglect that family. If Lucas Selby and his son turn Protestant, the Jesuits will lose the financial support of this Montpelier estate, which is likely considerable; and I would wish you to bear in mind they may hold that you should prevent this by all means at your command."

"Goldbetter," said I, after a space: "it is not possible for you and me to see these things from the same point of view, no matter how hard we may try to agree, by reason of the difference in our faith. But I should be a fool if I did not perceive some logic in your argument, and an ungrateful ass to boot, if I failed to thank you for your watchful care of my concerns. I do thank you from my heart, and I will remember your warnings; but I shall continue to hope that Mr. Selby may not be led astray from the faith for the sake of worldly gain."

I quitted Oswestry on the morrow of this walk with Goldbetter, and returned to Bromley Chase to resume my work with Oliver Selby, to whom I was becoming much attached. The boy was of an affectionate disposition, and his interest in the subjects we studied and his gratitude for the pains I was at to teach him, transformed the drudgery of tuition into a real pleasure, which we shared.

CHAPTER VI

THE PROVINCIAL'S LETTER

A MONTH or so after my visit to Goldbetter, namely, in October, 1708, the season of hunting began, when the whole family, if I except Mrs. Selby, would be early astir once or twice a week, and sometimes rid many miles to a meet of the foxhounds; though, if the distance was very wide, the young ladies were not permitted to follow the hounds all day. If the fox, when found at a far meet, stole away in the direction of home, well and good; but if not, they were customarily sent back in charge of a groom, and Oliver was wont to keep them company, while Mr. Selby and I went further afield.

The ladies were good horsewomen, and Joan, in particular, must have had much care bestowed on her instruction; for she sat well back in her saddle, upright and square with her horse; carrying her hands low, and yielding the beast such freedom of head as he needed.

They both wore the new riding habit that I had seen in France. I had heard it was much condemned in England, by the dwellers in cities who are unused to rural pursuits, as savouring too much of a man's dress. But in my judgment, for what it may be worth, it was a plain, sensible device for women who take part in the sport of hunting, where frills,

furbelows and commodes are as unsightly and inconvenient on horseback as they would be a danger to their wearers in leaping hedges or riding through coverts. In like manner, the wearing of hats like those of men, and the gathering of the hair into a net, were measures of safety that none should despise who knows the difficulty of following hounds through brushwood and hazels: while the fashion was no way unbecoming to the young and well-favoured, in spite of what Mr. Addison later said, to the contrary. On these days, when Oliver and I put aside our books and joined the family group, I saw more of the two sisters in a few weeks than in the same number of previous months, and I learned to admire their bold riding, which, indeed, was of note in the country-side. I cannot say I came to know the elder one much better than before, in spite of being much in her company, on the account of her reserved and distant manner which assumed, beyond question in my mind, the character of a cold pride. While Edith was of a gay nature, and suffered her emotions a more natural play on the surface than did her sister, Joan would hardly speak unless she should be first addressed, and even then indulged in no freedom of conversation.

This manner would have given me no inconvenience, since I was quite unused to the company of ladies and saw no need to seek it; but as the other sister became more intimate with me, by reason of her desire to treat me as one of the family, it was not easy to remember always that I must needs keep aloof from Joan.

Edith was for ever making fun of me and teasing

me on what she was pleased to call my French habits, which was but another way, I suspect, of letting me know she found me dull and awkward in female society and unready at a jest. Indeed, I doubt not, but I was uncouth enough from lack both of experience and inclination. And she was not much more than a merry child, whose friendly banter was not unpleasing to me; more especially when I came to comprehend that her correction of my manners was undertaken not so much for their real betterment, as to put me at my ease with her. It did not avail me to meet her sallies by pointing out that, by birth, she was more French than I; since neither she nor her sister affected any French qualities, and they were even poorly instructed in that language. A thing I have heard to be of no uncommon occurrence in the offspring of mixed marriages dwelling in the country of one of the parents.

But Miss Edith and I soon became good friends: and I even took it upon myself, later, to set her right when she sometimes erred in the grammar and idiom of the English language.

Joan had, I soon perceived, all her father's jealous affection for her brother, and more than his heed for the boy's happiness and ease; and this was shown, on occasion, to my particular discomfiture when we were out a'hunting.

It would serve no good purpose if I lingered over the rebuffs she saw fit to administer: and one instance will inform you as well as a multitude. I call to mind one day when a fox was found not far from Bromley Chase which made for the north-westward,

and gave us a long and slow chase. There were divers checks in the early part of the run; for the scent was weak till the hounds carried it slowly to the top of the Long Mynd, a narrow mountain of over a league in length, and somewhat flat, that rises abruptly from the undulating land around it. On the mountain top, which is clad with thick heath, the scent mended, or the hounds must have viewed the fox: and, in full cry, the whole pack, save two or three stragglers, raced across the narrow back, and disappeared down the far side. It was not possible to follow them at the pace they were then holding, by reason of the deep heath that was well-nigh up to the horses' girths, and most distressing to gallop through. So that, by the time I had crossed the Long Mynd, the hounds were nowhere to be seen or heard, and I was quite thrown out, as in fact was all the field.

We spread out down the far slopes of the mountain in search of the hounds with nothing to guide our way beyond experience of former like occasions: and in this manner I became separated from the others of our party. I chanced to come up with the hounds near the little hamlet of Ratlinghope and, finding they had killed the fox, I tarried to keep the pack together till the huntsman came up, when it was too late for further hunting. On the road home I overtook the ladies of our party: and, after telling them of the end of the chase, I was questioned at once by Joan:

"And where is Oliver?" she said.

"I can't say for sure," said I: "but he must be behind."

"Think where you last saw him," says she, as though she spoke to a groom.

"I think," said I, "it was somewhere on the Mynd, before we lost the hounds."

"You have not seen him," said she, "since you were on top of the Long Mynd?"

"No," said I: "I think not."

"Then," says she, "I must go back for him."

"Pardon me, mistress Joan," said I; "but if anyone should go back, it is certainly more my duty than yours; but I scarce think it will be needful for either of us to return."

"I wonder at you that you make so light on the matter," said she. "The poor boy is not of an age to look to himself, and if it is none other's charge, it is at least mine to see to it that he is not left behind in a ditch."

"You forget, I think, that his father is out," I replied; "and Oliver has orders to follow Mr. Selby always."

"I do not forget it, Mr. Repton," said Joan: "nor do I forget that, for all his orders, he had as like follow you as my father; liker: since he is grown so fond of you and knows you have been used to hunting since you were his age. But I won't ask you to go back if it troubles you."

It came to me that this was said with no kindly intent: neither did I think I had earned her rebuke by neglecting Oliver, whose father was entirely accountable for the lad when out a'hunting, and would doubtless have been the first to resent another person's assumption of this office. But, perceiving that the maid was really discomposed about the

safety of her brother, I turned me about and trotted back in the direction whence I came: only to meet, after a few furlongs, Oliver and his father jogging home at their ease.

It is to be supposed that her love of her brother, and the ill-health of Mrs. Selby, induced in Joan a maternal solicitude to supplement the short-comings of her father's guardianship of the boy when out of reach of his mother's ken. And I had been but a poor creature to have paid much heed to her humours in giving play to such a praiseworthy instinct.

But what courtesy was lacking to me in the behaviour of Mistress Joan Selby was made good in full measure by her sister, whose love of fun was tempered by fair play and much consideration for others. On the occasion I have mentioned she was disposed to ridicule Miss Joan's fears for Oliver's sake, and asked her at supper that evening if she had begged my pardon for putting me to so much trouble on the account of them.

As the winter of 1708, which was one of very severe weather, wore on, the frost put a stop to the hunting for many sennights; but, what was far more serious, the extreme cold affected Mrs. Selby to the extent that she now seldom went abroad, and was almost confined to the house, if not to her chamber and bed. She bore her troubles with a cheerful patience that was a brig'ıt pattern to all of us, but was not, I marked, followed by her husband, who became morose and gloomy, and kept away from the house so much that I was inclined to think Joan attributed his absence to lack of feeling. However that may have been, his discontent with all around him waxed

apace, and he was at no pains to conceal it. One would have had a greater pity on him if he had been bowed down with grief; but the spectacle of a man whose ill-humour seemed to be aggravated by this new calamity forbade a warm compassion, and suggested other causes than his wife's illness to be at the bottom of it.

The poor, suffering lady's spiritual needs were, at this time, supplied by a priest who came from Shrewsbury twice or thrice a month, and lay a night or two at Bromley Chase after his arrival there. The man held little converse with us at such times, possibly on the account of the family being used to the ministrations of Jesuit fathers and his own ignorance of our affairs. I spoke more than once to my host on the subject of asking Fr. Cornish to come and visit us in this time of tribulation; but he brushed the matter by with such warmth, not to say violence, when I pressed the point, that I could not but call to mind Goldbetter's rumours of his impending change of faith. I dismissed the suspicion, however, from want of a surer ground than this on which to base it. After all, Fr. Cornish was an old friend of the Selby family, leastways since the marriage of Mrs. Selby. And it was as much a cause of wonder that he came not of his own accord to visit us the whole time I was at Bromley Chase, as that Lucas Selby should be averse to inviting him at this particular date. You are to know later the reason of this strange absence of the father who, though he writ me from time to time, never spoke of visiting us.

However, Fr. Cornish did not come, although he

knew of Mrs. Selby's danger: and, that her illness was no secret to others whom it might concern, was brought to my knowledge in a somewhat startling manner through a letter I got by the post some weeks later, and after we had ceased to have grave apprehensions on her account. In fact the early spring was come, and the softer breath from the mountains of the west that was beginning to paint the rusty upland pastures with a new coat of green, was likewise renewing the strength of our invalid to the point of recovery.

The letter was writ by the provincial in Paris, and its receipt was the more astonishing to me that he had not before sent me a letter, nor ever spoke of writing to me; while my acquaintance with him was scarce of greater length than I have set down in my history. It was in the French, but I give you its true rendering as follows:—

"PARIS AT THE COLLEGE OF THE
"COMPANY OF JESUS,
"RUE ST. ANTOINE,
"*23rd March*, 1709.

"DEAR BROTHER,—It has been made known to the Reverend Father-General that Mrs. Lucas Selby (born Julie de l'Amirot) is suffering grievously and like, at no distant date, to lay down the burden of this mortal life. He hears furthermore that Lucas Selby is being sore oppressed by the cruelty and tyranny of the heretic English Government that threatens to seize his lands if he turn not, with his son, from the only true faith. Now, therefore, you, Charles Repton, whom it has pleased God to call to

this mission of our society for the conversion and comfort of the weaker vessels in unhappy England, I do charge to be instant in prayers and supplications, together with all the members of this afflicted family, for that they may remain steadfast. And, to the end that the General may be exactly informed of the spiritual condition of Lucas Selby and his wife, you are hereby enjoined to write me a full account of all dealings the said family may have had with any the heretic clergy. In order that he may doubt nothing of your good meaning in all, you must needs write openly of any suspicions you may harbour of their apostasy and keep him so informed hereafter.

"Yours wholly in God,

"CAVALERUS."

So then, the murder was out as they say it always will: and here was I expected to report on the private concerns of the man whose food I was eating. In the first moments of rebellious, wounded pride I sat me down and made answer in a letter which, after some reflection, I destroyed. I then bethought me that I must consult Goldbetter whose warnings had thus unhappily been justified, and I made ready to ride to Oswestry. But before I set forth the thought came to me that this was a battle I must fight by myself without aid from any. I was sure Goldbetter would counsel my instant departure from Bromley Chase and removal from a position fraught with the conceivable stigma of dissimulation and espionage, while for my own part some instinct (perhaps it was pride) told me I needed to be free to settle that point for myself, after due contemplation of it. How

should I be able to weigh the question of whether it would befit my honour to continue to live at Bromley Chase if I sought the counsel of a man who, I knew beforehand, would urge me to quit the position he always misliked for me? To turn my back on the difficulty and run from where my duty to Oliver Selby now seemed to lie (though the position was none of my seeking in the first place) was easy; but it would be no remedy of the ill, so far as the boy was concerned: and I must have time to consider of my proper course of behaviour. So I changed my mind a second time, thrust the letter into my pocket, and went for a ride with my charge instead.

During the greater part of the time of our long war with France, there was no direct post from Paris to England: and this letter had been delayed on the road by having to pass through Holland; so that I reckon it must have been in the first sennight of April I received it. It was a day of mild breezes, sunshine and light showers: and the glistening landscape was now in tears and now in smiles. We took the way of the high ground to the north of Bromley Chase, whence we could see across the broad valley betwixt us and the chain of hills that guard, like outposts, the whole length of the Long Mynd on its eastern side. We watched the shadows from the travelling clouds as they pursued each other round the slopes of the opposite hills, and in and out of the coverts of budding larches, till the sun, screening his glory behind a towering crest of heath, put an end to their games, and told us that life is short, and it was time to turn homeward.

On the way back I drew Oliver, who was in talking

mood, on to the subject of my going away ; but the mere mention of such a possibility put him into so great a distress that, by the time we gained the house, I had determined to remain for a season, at least, at Bromley Chase, and return no answer at all to the letter from the provincial.

You that are older and wiser than I then was, will, perhaps, judge my indiscretion severely (as you may have had cause to do already in this history), and I shall be the last to blame you. But at the same time, I invite you to consider of the scanty premonition I had that the upshot of my resolve would be of moment to the lives of any of the party at Bromley Chase. And when you shall have had full knowledge, I challenge proof that the ensuing calamity was the issue of my tarrying there.

Mrs. Selby's health happily continued to mend as the days grew longer until it ceased, about a month later, to be a matter of greater concern to her family than it had been before the winter. In fact, though far from strong, she was just herself: no more and no less.

There was held at Shrewsbury a yearly show and horse fair which by custom fell on the second Monday after Trinity. This spring, however, for a reason I have forgot, the fair took place in the first days of May: and Mr. Selby had occasion to attend it for the sale of some young horses that he bred himself. Oliver and I were to bear him company and, just before we set off, Edith obtained permission to join the party, since she was always much interested in the young horses, which were noted for their quality in the country round Shrewsbury. The four of us were followed by no servants, by reason that every

man who could be spared was already gone to the town in charge of the horses for sale. There was a good market that year, the beasts fetched high prices, and Mr. Selby was in great heart as we returned.

It fell that I rid by Edith's side the most of the road home: and when we were out of hearing of the other two, she shook her graceful head and, bending slightly forward in her saddle:

"Oliver tells me," says she, "that you spoke, not long since, of quitting Bromley Chase, and the poor fellow mayn't be comforted because he fears lest such might still be your intention. Now I have racked my fancy to the utmost and can think of but one reason for your mislike to stay with us: and I do assure you, if I am right in my surmise, that you are much mistaken in supposing that any one of us (and I speak for *all* the female part of the household) would not be grieved at your departure. I except *none*."

She said this with a pretty blush that scarce increased the healthy colour with which the open air and the horse exercise had already dressed her merry face: and I was as much amused at her becoming bashfulness as I was astonished at the subject of her talk.

"Why, Miss Edith," said I: "it is kind of you to make such a pretty speech: and somewhat outside of custom, too, to drop the character of critic in deportment, is it not? I know not what I have done to merit such an attention. 'Tis near a month since I talked with Oliver of the matter, and he seemed to take so much to heart the notion of my leaving that I determined for his sake, as well as to indulge my own inclination, to try and let things remain as they are for a space."

"You mean you will put up with the ill-convenience for his sake and the love you have for him. That is very kind," said Edith: "and both my mother and I shall be most grateful if you can bear with her a little longer."

"Are we not at cross purposes?" said I, still more amused. "I did not intend that Oliver should repeat our conversation and, in fact, the ill-convenience you allude to was a secret I did not disclose."

"No; but my mother and I can guess what it is," said she, making busy with her horse's mane: and again the shyness that was so unusual to her (but yet set off her beauty) made her speech very taking, as she went on: "If you could know how much your going away would trouble my mother, I am sure you would try to tolerate Joan's manners."

"But, Miss Edith," said I: "your sister's behaviour to me had nothing to say to this question of my quitting Bromley Chase. The real point is one I cannot very well discover to you, since it concerns divers other persons beside myself: and it is conceivable that if I revealed the secret, the very evil might arise that I am now striving to evade."

She was somewhat disconcerted at this explanation; but it did not take her long to recover her composure and, "I'm glad to hear that Joan has nothing to do with your intentions in the matter," says she: "the more so, since I know that she puts you very high in her esteem, near as high as my mother, in fact. She said but the other night that she always felt sure Oliver is safe when he is out with you; and I have heard her tell my mother, more than once, what a happy fortune she thinks it was that brought you to

the house. But she is always for showing everyone the worst side of her: and we can't cure Joan, though we would not change her for anyone else in the world. So you see how it is, Mr. Repton," she went on. "Joan won't bring herself to tell you that you are a truly welcome visitor here—a benefactor indeed: so I take it upon myself to do it: not very gracefully, I fear; but nevertheless in grateful recognition of your favours to us."

"You speak," said I, "neither ungracefully, Miss Edith, nor in a manner I am like to forget for long enough. It would be idle to deny that I have marked your sister's seeming aversion to me, more particularly in regard to the concerns of Oliver; but I can promise you that I have not treated her rebuffs very seriously, nor borne the least ill will for her jealous heed of her brother—but I see your horse has cast a shoe, and we shall have to stop to get him shod at Leebotwood smithy, which is close at hand."

We were but a short distance from Leebotwood on our homewood journey, and the others were riding a few score paces in front of us when I trotted up to tell Mr. Selby of the lost shoe. He said he would ride on home with Oliver if I would be at the pains to wait behind with Edith and get the horse shod in the village, which is less than two leagues from Bromley Chase.

A shower of rain came on as Edith and I reached the forge; so, leaving the horses with the smith, I carried her to the small inn hard by to gain shelter in the meanwhile. The Shrewsbury horse fair was a notable function which attracted large numbers of

farmers and other country-men from far and near, as well as dealers, gipsy rabble and the like, insomuch that the high roads were thronged beyond the ordinary while it lasted. Not knowing what sort of folk might be within, I entered the inn alone to see if there would be space in the parlour to accommodate a lady of quality, and left Miss Edith in the porch.

The inn parlour was occupied by two or three women, such as farmers' wives waiting while their men drank in the bar, and one man who looked by his dress to be a gentleman. His back was towards me while he stood at a window that gave on to the back of the bar for the convenience of passing food and drink through; and he appeared to be settling his score for some refreshment, the remains of which lay on the table before me. Picking up a few coins from the counter, he strode across to a door on the far side of the chamber that led to the stable yard: and something in the man's gait seemed familiar to me. Though I saw but his side face as he passed out, I was well-nigh certain that he could be none other than Tresham; and all my old horror of him took such sudden possession of me, that my first impulse was to turn and flee from him, as from the devil himself. What I did, however, was to stand stock-still and stare after him, as though I had no power to stir back or forward; until there flew into my head the thought that he must be there for someone's hurt, and that I, who, perhaps, alone knew him, should at least satisfy myself that he was not taking the road to Bromley Chase. To this end I followed into the stable yard in time to see him mount his horse and ride away on the road to

Shrewsbury. I saw his full face as he turned out of the yard gate and, if it was not Tresham, it was, at least his very match. He did not seem to have observed me, though, of course, he might well have seen Edith and me through the parlour window when we approached the inn.

The ostler who had held his horse stood to watch him as he rode away; so I went up to the man and: "Do you know that gentleman?" said I.

"No, your honour, I have not his name," said he. "I doubt he'll be strange to these parts, for all I'm thinking I seen him once before. Dorrington way yesternight it was; and he in talk with some gipsy-like folk in the dusk. Yes, that's him."

"If you should chance to see him again," said I, "and can find out his name, will you send it to the host of the Talbot Arms at Church Stretton?" And I handed the fellow a crown and ran through the yard gate to the front of the inn, where I found Edith still in the porch, and not a little impatient at my long delay to inform her whether she could enter the parlour.

"I do declare you are a proper cavalier, Mr. Repton, to a maiden in distress through the rain," said she. "Why, so soon after my pretty speeches to you, too, it savours of ingratitude to leave me standing here so long. Indeed, the shower is passed, and we may as well now back to the forge, I suppose, to get our nags,—why, what ails you? You look as if you had seen a ghost!"

"I wish I may have seen only a ghost, Miss Edith," said I; "but I fear there is no doubt I have seen Tresham in the flesh: and that must be my

excuse for having kept my kind friend waiting so long. It was no ingratitude, believe me."

"And who in the world may Tresham be?" says she.

"Why, of course, you know naught of him," said I; "as how should you? But I know not how to describe him save as a man whose presence bodes ill to those who have a mind to thwart him; since he stops at nothing to get his will."

"But what is this amazing man?" said Edith.

"He says he is a Jesuit for one thing, and he is certainly a Jacobite for another. But it is not for what he is that I dread him," said I; "it is for what he does, or makes his agents do. Though, if you come to think of it, he did not take the road to Bromley Chase, and as your father is no Jacobite, his business here cannot be of a sort to harm any of you. But there's mischief brewing for someone Dorrington way, as the ostler said, or I am mistaken."

"Come, that's better than Bromley Chase, any way," said she with a droll smile. "But if he is an English Jesuit, he must surely be known to Fr. Cornish, who would not let him harm us. But you entirely astonish me, Mr. Repton, for I had thought you one of those persons who are never disturbed by untoward occasions, and have some remedy at hand for every ill. And now I perceive you are quite frightened by a vision in an alehouse parlour."

"You are in the right: Tresham is well known to Fr. Cornish," said I; "but, unhappily, that fact does not render the man harmless; or, at least, such was not my experience in Paris. It would be too long a

story to tell you how I came to know the man so well; but I lived with him for many long months, and I would do a great deal to avoid meeting him again. Still, it is not to be supposed he is here about any of my concerns, or yours: 'tis doubtless but a strange hazard that let me see him in the inn, and I will try to think no more of him. I am sorry to hear I have not justified the good opinion of my wisdom that you were pleased to hold, and I daresay I was foolish to be in fear of the man. But the sight of him brought back to me the remembrance of a hateful afternoon in Paris, and of a wound I received, from which I was but newly recovered when I first saw you."

"Oh, pray tell me all about it, Mr. Repton," says she: "and please forgive my ill-timed jest. How very exciting; and how stupid in me to suppose you would be disturbed without a cause. But were you badly hurt?"

"Some day I will gladly tell you the story, should you care to hear it," said I: "for it was exciting to me: and worse, I think. But I had rather wait and tell it you when you know me a little better; since I think it right to inform you it is a story that Fr. Cornish does not believe."

Miss Edith was silent for well-nigh the rest of the way home, and what she thought upon it I know no more than you.

As we rid through Church Stretton I stopped at the Talbot Arms, and arranged that any news of Tresham, if indeed it was Tresham, which the ostler might bring, should be carried to me at Bromley Chase.

CHAPTER VII

A MORNING ON THE RIVER

MR. SELBY carried Edith with him on a short visit to his uncle at Leominster a couple of days after the ride to Shrewsbury fair; and soon after they were gone Oliver and I set out for a morning on the river with our angle rods. The day was warm, and the little wind there was came from the west, and bore on its wings the fresh smell of the heath-clad mountains after a night of rain. The sun was somewhat bright, though veiled at intervals with laggard fleecy clouds that often foretell good fortune to the fly angler, if rain shall keep off.

Oliver was ambidextrous with his rod and cast a pretty line: far excelling me in the physical skill of the craft. But he was not so apt in the selection of his flies to simulate the natural hatches on the river, nor so ready in his judgment of the convenient sizes to suit the varying depths of the water, in flood, as his father would have wished; albeit his zeal for the sport was as great as his patience.

When we sighted the river, however, it was at once made manifest that no nice selection of flies would be needful this morning, for the May-fly was on the water: and the trout were holding noisy revel as well in the deep pools as in the shallower runs where the quarrelling of the stream with the boulders did not deaden the sound of their carnival.

It was a memorable one, the spring of 1709, if for no other reason than that the hatch of May-fly, which by custom is not expected to appear till the end of that month or the first days of June, was the earliest that any angler could call to mind.

The voice of nature has many beautiful notes to break the silence of her ruling calm. And I think we all agree that birds and insects are the most pleasing instruments of her melody ; though, notwithstanding that she swells at times the chorus with the harsher tones of cattle and domestic beasts, she is never out of harmony to the ears of her faithful adorers.

Now, the advent of the May-fly creates on the rivers a music whose sweetness is its rarity in the Midlands ; since we hear it but once a year, and then only if we have fortune to be by the stream at the right moment. And the angler loves the sounds from these concerts of kisses held by the rising trout no less than the warbling voices of the song birds, though it may be from an unworthier taste that is born of his animal appetite. And herein, perhaps, lies the glory of fox-hunting over other sports, that we have no mind to eat our quarry while we pursue him and, when the hounds have caught him, we grudge them not their meal at the end of a successful chase.

The sandpiper was there this morning, playing his panic flute, as though he feared the whole world was seeking his impudently exposed nest: and the black water crow in his clean white shirt ruffle was busy teaching his brood to dive, hard by the buttress of a ruined bridge. But we had no time to waste, just now,

on the study of these comrades of the river bank; our business lay in seizing the golden moments of the rise while it lasted, and to work we went up stream a few score yards apart.

We had covered about a mile of the river and were about the same distance from the house, when the trout, as they often will in the midst of a hatch, began to tire of our lures and to rise with only half a heart in it; so we agreed to rest and count our baskets. We had between us some fifteen trout of good proportions and rare condition: and Oliver was lamenting, as I have often done, the short duration of the orange and scarlet finery in which they are dressed as they leave the water and before they stiffen in death, when I heard a low whistle that seemed to come from somewhere near at hand. I looked about, but could not immediately perceive whence the sound came: and it then entered my mind that I had heard the whistle more than once before, in contrast with the notes of the sandpipers, though I had not given it heed by reason of the engrossing sport that engaged us at the time. Now, however, I was alert to the sound and was not to wait many moments before it was repeated: and this time my eye caught the whistler half concealed by a holly bush on the farther side of the river, which was toward home.

It was Joan Selby, with a white face and outstretched arm, who seemed to point her finger in the direction of the country behind me. I was about to cry out and bid her cross the river by the little wooden footbridge, about a furlong lower down the stream, if she would care to see our catch of fish,

when I observed her other hand was covering her mouth as if to entreat silence: and I then perceived she was much agitated. I turned round to let my eyes follow the direction her hand indicated and I made out that the bank on which Oliver and I stood rose somewhat steep from the river a score or so of yards to a hazel hedge, beyond which I could see naught but the tops of trees that formed a large covert some two hundred paces further back. I ran up the bank, looked over the fence, and saw a field of wheat no more than a foot high that separated the covert from the hedge: but of human beings, mad bulls, or other causes of female panic, there was not a sign. So I turned again towards the river in wonder, and now saw the maid making her way to the footbridge I have told you of.

The river was here too deep for wading, or I should have crossed it without more ado, and got her reasons for all this mysterious dumb show, that was to me unwonted. She moved swiftly, albeit with caution: and she stooped while she went as who should avoid being seen from beyond the bank on which I stood.

She was a maid whose disposition would not be thought to lend itself to false alarms, and I had observed in her and her sister a singular freedom from many other small female weaknesses which, I supposed, their life in the open air had taught them to overcome. This thought passed through my mind as, uncertain what to do in such a strange perplexity, I hastened on my side of the river to meet her at the bridge, and learn the nature of her fears. But already she had seen my purpose and

stopped to wave me back towards Oliver, who had moved farther up stream and was now pursuing his craft again as though he thought his sister's humour not worth the loss of a single trout.

For my part I, too, could see no sort of sense in these wild gestures of the young lady, and was standing irresolute for a moment, when I again faced about in answer to a cry from the boy. Then I saw to my amazement that three gipsies (or so they seemed) who must have crossed the fence while my back was towards them, had surrounded Oliver, and two of them were bearing him away in the direction of the hedge.

There were no more than a couple of hundred paces that separated us: and as I ran back in a cold sweat of consternation, I strove to console my distress by counting that the men, who were armed with short cutlasses such as seamen wear, could not get far with their burden before I should overtake them. And though I was unarmed I had no fear of their weapons, seeing it was broad daylight and they but base folk that most honest men's hands are against. It never came into my mind till later that the hour was about noon, when all farmers and labourers are resting indoors at their midday meal and the fields and roads, except at hay and corn harvest, are as void of men and women as a wilderness.

The gipsies had some trouble at the hedge by reason of Oliver's struggles, which the third man joined in helping to overcome: and, even in my haste, I thought I could perceive they were not minded to do him bodily harm. I gained rapidly on them

and shouted to the boy to encourage him and let him know I was coming to his help. And I should doubtless soon have reached them had not a fourth man now leaped the fence who, drawing a sword, placed himself in front of me, midway betwixt the river and the hedge, to dispute my advance. He too was dressed after the manner of a gipsy; but he wore a mask and, even in the short space of time I had to observe him, I perceived there was that in his carriage which gave the lie to his disguise.

My first intention was to avoid him if I could, so eager was I to reach Oliver; but even if I escaped him over the hedge, he, by following my example, would still be nearer to my goal than I. Moreover I marked a pistol in his belt, and it came to me with a hasty conviction that an enemy behind, if he have fire-arms, would be a greater hindrance and danger than two in front, whose hands I could watch. So, without further reflection, I shortened my grasp somewhat on the angle rod which I had never quitted, and with the butt, which was stout and shod with iron, pointed at his breast I ran full tilt against the man. When my intention became manifest, it seemed to disconcert the fellow in a measure, for I saw him hesitate a second, while his left hand made for his belt as though to draw the pistol. No doubt he feared the noise this weapon would make even though the fields were deserted; but, in truth, he had not time to use it if he would, for I was upon him before he could do more than fall on guard. And it would likewise seem that the speed with which I made up my mind to attack him deprived him of the power to seek vantage ground.

For it chanced that I was happily somewhat higher up the bank than my adversary, a superiority that added weight to my charge, and made it more difficult to parry with a small sword. At least, he was unable to avoid the rod or turn it with his sword wider than his chin which it struck with force enough to roll him down the bank.

I had no stomach for a closer encounter with the fellow, and I should have left him where he lay to pursue the other miscreants who were now disappeared with Oliver over the fence; but, as he fell, the man's pistol dropped from his waist, and, seeing it on the ground, I was tempted to possess the wherewithal to coerce the knaves who had robbed me of my charge. I stooped to take it up and in a flash, with what seemed to me a rare agility, the fallen man had me by the leg below the knee, while together we rolled till we were close to the river's edge. By some skilful trick, that showed like greater strength, he contrived to fling his legs apart, as we rolled, in such manner that he was uppermost when we stopped, and before I could think what his intention with me was, I felt the fingers of one hand close on my neck, while with the other he sought the pistol that I yet held by the barrel even as I had seized it.

I felt his hot breath as he hissed in my face: "Not so fast, my holy squire of maidens; water will serve quite as well as steel. I can choke and drown you too, my dear Charles." And by that I knew of a certainty, what I suspected the moment I saw him, that I had to do with Francis Tresham. Moreover, I knew, too, that he now supposed he could do with

me what it pleased him: and the knowledge was none to my comforting.

This was a manner of warfare in which I had no experience, neither had had instruction from my masters at Lagaraye's Academy in Paris, whose curriculum of military exercises was confined to those becoming a polite gentleman. And in sober earnest I had like to have fared ill in the encounter, but for the hazard of a discovery that my assailant, for all his superior skill, was much less powerful than I. Rather to keep the pistol from him, I think, than with intention to do him serious hurt, for I could not use my whole arm as I lay pinned to the ground, I thrust the pommel in his face which was instantly covered with blood. And as he recoiled from the blow, which was not heavy, his grasp of my throat relaxed a little. In a moment I had thrown the pistol clear of us and seized his throat with both my hands (forcing it from me near at arm's length), while he strove to part them with as little success as if they had been twisted cords about his neck. At last I had found my strength, and knew that he was as a child in my clutches. I can say with truth that the feeling was new to me but, God help me, it was one of an intense pleasure to have Tresham in my power.

I had heard speak of the lust of strife, and they had been to me as empty words, lacking meaning which was now supplied. I knew for the moment the joy of the soldier in battle who knows his cause to be a just one: and I had no compassion on this man's suffering. As his struggles slackened my grasp seemed to tighten with a new delight, and then I

shook him till his head fell on my breast without sign of life. I spurned his body as I arose and disengaged myself from it, till his legs were already lapped by the water of the shelving river bank: and then I awoke from the dream of blood to pull the man clear of danger from drowning and satisfy myself that he still breathed.

I think only those who have been trained and educated as I had been could understand my guilty emotion when I contemplated my murderous feelings of a few seconds gone, albeit I had no regret for what I had done. What shamed me was the spirit in which I did it, that seemed to lower me to the level of the man lying there.

But this was no time to dwell on remorse: and the remembrance of the bitter wrong that was being done, spurred me on to continue the pursuit of the gipsies whose tracks through the young green corn I had no difficulty in following as far as the post and rail fence that surrounded the big covert. Here my search would have been at fault but for the cries of Joan Selby, which I heard near the middle of the wood. I had regained possession of the angle rod, and the pistol whose priming I examined and found undisturbed, before I leaped into the covert to her assistance. The better to form another handy weapon also, I broke the rod across my knee about four feet from the butt and, running to the place whence the sound of the cries issued, I presently came in view of the gipsies with whom Joan was struggling for the possession of her brother.

If I had given the lady a thought since entering on this strife, it was to hope she would have run to the

house to give the alarm, in place of joining in the pursuit which she could no way forward. But we were a mile away from home: and now I could find it in my heart to thank her for her service; since, not only did her cries guide me, but it chanced that she kept the men engaged with their backs towards me as I approached them.

She had followed by a shorter path from the bridge, coming up with the ravishers in the wood, and it is to be thought the rogues were not so much hindered by her interference as that they tarried for instructions from the man I had left half-strangled down the bank. However that may have been, I fell upon the man next me and knocked him down with a stunning blow on the head from the rod. The other two men, surprised by my sudden onslaught, let go of Oliver and turned to oppose me; one of them drew his cutlass, as the other was about to do when I struck his right arm above the wrist with such force from the rod that it fell powerless by his side, so that it looked to be broken. The third man made as though he would attack me; but he kept out of reach of my rod.

"Run you home with Oliver," I cried to Miss Selby; "and leave me to deal with these men." Then, addressing the uninjured man: "Pack off the lot of you," said I, "before I raise the hue and cry in the country-side, when you will all be like to hang for your sins. If you move another step before you return that weapon, I'll blow your brains out." And I shifted the pistol to my right hand.

The fellow muttered a curse as he sullenly put back the cutlass into its scabbard: and I could

perceive, from his fumbling manner of doing it, that he had no proper knowledge of its use.

"Here, better still," said I: "hand that over to me, rascal." And covering him still with the pistol, I made the fellow give me the weapon, which he was by no means over reluctant to do.

"Give us time, master," said the ruffian: "and we'll not trouble you and the young gentleman more. A scurvy plague take the kidnapping masquerader. I never liked the job, and told him from the first that it should be done by cunning and not by force. This comes of letting a stranger have his way."

Joan had not complied with my request, for she and Oliver stood a few paces back, watching the strange scene, while I assisted to raise the fallen man. I did not urge her further, since we now seemed out of danger, and I saw nothing to prevent me from bearing them company home, which doubtless she was tarrying for.

The man who had first spoken now asked me if I knew where the gentleman was, meaning Tresham as I understood him, and "I left him by the river," said I; "but you're not going after him now; I can tell you that. You'll just quit this place the way you came here. I will see to the gentleman if he needs help: and you'd better be off before the serving men come to look for the lady." For I thought it well to make believe that succour was not far off, if it should be needed.

"They all came by the road," said Joan; "I watched them from the top of Six-Acre Bank till they got into this wood from the road. I waited till I saw them all come out on the other side: and when they

spread out up the river bank, as if in search of you, I was frightened and came to the opposite bank to warn you."

On the side opposite that by which we entered it, the wood was bounded by a road that led, one way to Bromley Chase by a stone bridge over the river, the other to the Hereford Road, about half a league distant.

The fallen man, who was somewhat recovered as we got him on his legs, was able to walk when supported by the other two (though one of them could use but one arm), and I watched the three men retire in this fashion until they disappeared over the fence into the road.

The shortest way home lay along a path in the covert that led through the corner of a grass field, and over a stile, straight to the footbridge by which Joan had crossed the river. In fact, it was this way she went in pursuit of the gipsies: and as soon as the men were out of sight we followed this path.

Oliver said he was none the worse for the rough handling of the gipsies and, albeit his clothes were in some disorder, he treated the adventure lightly, if not in actual jest. But his sister, who had suffered no personal injury, was in an extreme disquiet; though now that she had her brother safe by her side, to my grave astonishment, she seemed to be more concerned for my case than aught else. She still wept mutely when she spoke, and I urged her in vain to be silent till we should get back to the house and could consider of what had best be done in the matter of having the law of Tresham. I had some of the man's blood on my face and neck for his head

was above me when I struck him with the pommel of the pistol: and "I am quite sure you are badly wounded," says Joan, "though you won't say so, Mr. Repton: and it adds to my trouble to know your hurts were got in defence of Oliver. If you will take him home, I would save time by going to Church Stretton now and fetching Surgeon Williams to see you."

"I have not a scratch, Mistress Selby, so I pray you make no more pother about me. This blood," said I, wiping my face, "is none of mine. It comes from the greatest villain, I think, on God's earth, who is a scandal to the creed we profess. At least I never heard speak of a worse evil than that which is deliberately wrought without provocation in the name of religion. Why he should associate with gipsy rabble is a conceit of his own that is perhaps not worth the pains to enquire into; but what he has to gain by harming Oliver is a question that touches us very nearly: and it is a luckless hap that your father should be away just when we need his counsel as to how we ought to deal with Tresham."

"I do not know whom you mean by Tresham," says Joan; "but it's clear to me that they wanted to steal Oliver away to put him to some of their vile, cheating trades. I have heard it is not uncommon for them to kidnap children as well as to lay thieving hands on forks and spoons that may lie within reach of them. And they might well suppose that we, being Catholics, would perhaps make less noise over our loss than would others in the country. But thanks to your readiness they have been discomfited, and oh! I shall never forget it, Mr. Repton. I never

heard of a braver deed done by a man without weapons and taken by surprise at such a disadvantage ——"

"Aye! but that won't meet this case," said I, breaking in on her; for though I am nothing loath to receive praise when I think it is due and should be given, I had done naught just now but my bare duty, leaving out my late hunger to choke my former friend. Moreover, I thought such praise came somehow ill from the lady who had been used to treat me more like a servant than a friend. But then I had no understanding of the sex nor inclination to acquire one. "You see," I went on: "Oliver is over age for that sort of gipsy traffic. They do not need boys who are like to remember the roads round their homes for many a year: nor do they incline to steal any but those who are young enough to have their limbs and joints trained to the postures and tumbling. At least, I was told such when I lived in the north. Moreover, by what that gipsy said, it is to be thought they were mere agents in a job for which they had no great relish: and that is borne out by the half-hearted way they tried to fight. No: I think we must search for other motives to connect Tresham with this atrocity."

And again, like her sister three days before, Joan wanted to know who Tresham was.

I was telling them (for Oliver was now interested) about the man, and wondering in my mind all the time what could have possessed him to embark on such a risky enterprise that I, in God's mercy, had so easily overthrown, when we reached the footbridge I have mentioned so often. It was a stout

little bridge, resting on low stone piers in the river, with a handrail on either side of it; but scarce broad enough to admit two persons to walk abreast on it, being but two planks in width.

Here we tarried for a space: and I again asked Joan to go home at once with her brother while I walked along the bank up stream to find out what was become of Tresham. I made sure he would be recovered from the shaking he had got from me; but I did not fear the man one jot now, for had I not shown him that, in fair fight without weapons, I was more than his match? And I made nothing of his having a sword; since here was I with a loaded pistol and the cutlass I had taken from the gipsy, albeit that was a weapon in whose use I had no skill. But, in fact, I apprehended that he would have lost his appetite for strife with me, and I never thought to find him where I had left him.

Since our struggle had taken place somewhat nearer to the bridge than was the spot on which Oliver had been captured, I had not to go very far before I noted the signs of the fight in the down-trodden grass on the bank, and the marks of Tresham's blood close by the water's edge. There were no other traces of the man; he was out of sight: so I went on to pick up Oliver's angle rod and the baskets of trout which I found unmolested.

As I walked back along the bottom of the bank close to the river, the footbridge was screened from my view by a clump of alder bushes until I was within a hundred paces or so of it, when I saw, to my annoyance, that Mistress Selby and Oliver were yet upon it, leaning over the handrail in talk while

they gazed into the stream in my direction. It did not seem a great matter; but I was put out on the account of so little heed being paid to my wishes by one that was, but now, for loading me with praise I had no inclination for. I had no fear of any further danger; but I thought the girl should have hearkened to my counsel and got home to rest and eat.

At this time I had never seen the inside of a play-house. But I have done so since, many times, and that which now happened can be best described, in its effect on my senses, as a scene in a new tragedy whose plot is unknown to the audience, viewed from a far-distant seat. The catastrophe was wholly unforeseen, and the figures in the representation moved with such an appearance of unreality in the bright sunlight, that it was hard to figure to myself my own personal interest in their doings.

Two men ran cautiously from the direction of the stile we had lately crossed, and gained the bridge before the brother and sister, whose backs were turned to them, had looked up from the water. And the pair were seized in a few seconds more to the screams of Joan Selby that I shall think to hear till I am in the grave. A moment later came a third man in the same manner, and I thought I saw a fourth climbing the stile, as I ran to the rescue in such a turmoil of passion as I had never known before.

It seemed so cruel a fortune to forfeit, by a few minutes' delay, the success I had gained not half an hour gone: and what exasperated me almost beyond endurance, and added to the stage-play completion of the scene, was the cold-blooded deliberation of

these hell-hounds, or of the master-mind that controlled them. For the third man had no sooner set foot on the rising ground that commanded and led on to the footbridge, than he slowly turned about with his drawn sword to face me (when I should arrive) and defend the bridge, while his comrades bound the prisoners. For all the world as if he had been trained to a piece of acting.

They had, in fact, been too clever for me, and it may be the knowledge that I had been out-witted increased my wrath to near a frenzy; though it did not deprive me of sober judgment.

My mind was made in a twinkling. They durst not use fire-arms from fear of raising the alarm, but I was under no such restriction and I would shoot the man like a rabbit where he stood. As I came up to him I made no mistake and fired the pistol into his breast at a distance of less than three yards. He recoiled two or three steps till he was on the bridge, tried to grasp the handrail with a fearful shriek like a woman's, fell in a heap on the foot planks, and slipped off into the river, sword and all, with a splash that covered me with the spray.

I tarried but half a second to draw the cutlass, and, flinging the scabbard away, was about to leap on to the bridge to attack the two men who were busy with the prisoners, when one of them advanced along the bridge to meet me with his sword.

His mask was gone, and indeed he had now no further use for it, since his face was so swollen (like a pumpkin it looked, save for the colour which was of a dull purple shade), and his eyes were so blood-shot that it needed an intimate acquaintance to know

the man. But, for all that, I knew it was Tresham, and at the same moment my Paris experience came to my aid and prompted me to stay where I was, and receive him at the exit from the bridge, where I should have space to wield my unhandy weapon, while he would be hampered in sword play by the handrails which were as high as his elbows. So should I have the advantage even with the clumsy cutlass.

He paused when he grasped the meaning of my manœuvre, and then I think he knew, as well as I did, that he stood in bad case. Still he came on slowly, as though calculating, with a hateful smile on his distorted face, to what we both thought to be his doom: and even at that instant of passion I could not help but admire the man's courage. He halted again twice before he reached the outlet, to tempt me into casting away my advantage by a rash over-confidence in it. But I was as cool and calculating as himself by now: and anyone but a fool could perceive what hung on the issue of a little patience on my part. He tried two feints, and then saw that his position was hopeless, a straight thrust being all he had space to deliver: and for that I took heed to offer him no opportunity, shifting rapidly from side-post to side-post of the bridge the moment our blades touched. Suddenly he retired a pace to lunge under the rail, slipped, possibly in the blood of his agent: and before he could recover I should have had him at my mercy, when I felt the fourth man's presence in my rear.

In my fancied security I had forgot the fellow: and, swinging round to face him, I delivered the stroke on his shoulder that I had aimed at Tresham. The

gipsy (for he was one of them) went down bellowing like an ox; but the fight was over for me. The next moment Tresham had me from behind. I was sensible of the same sickening feeling of heat between my shoulders that I had known in the club in the Rue St. Martin, and I remember naught more.

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPTY HOUSE

ABOUT midway betwixt Welshpool and the little town of Llanfair, in Wales, stood (and stands yet, for I have seen it within the twelvemonth) a house that was without occupants in the spring of the year 1709. It is not a great way from the road; but there are no dwellings, other than the stables and cottages that belong to it, nearer than two miles: and if it is not held to be in a lonesome site it must be by reason of four cross-roads that join within a couple of hundred yards of its gate. But, although the point of meeting of cross-roads may argue a certain confluence of foot-passengers, horsemen, and even coaches, it has also to bear the infamy that attaches to the burial place of those who make away with themselves; so that its neighbourhood, if not lonesome, may well be misfortunate.

As you shall hear, I myself came near to being laid in this very soil, albeit not from the customary cause.

The house belonged to a nobleman who lacked a tenant of it at that time: and it was empty of furniture save a few beds and kitchen appointments for the use of the servant whose duty it was to visit the place once in the fortnight, in order to open the windows and light some fires. But this knowledge only came to me later, for on my first entrance into

the house, being insensible, I knew nothing of these or any other matters, and I had been living near two days in the place before I became aware of the fact.

When I first awoke to clear consciousness I found myself in bed in the kitchen: and a man who leaned over me was listening to my heart. He was a surgeon from Welshpool, and beside him stood another man with a basin and towels, who was presently waved back by the first man.

"You can put the basin by," said he; "we shall not need to bleed the gentleman again. The next thing is to make blood for him, and take no more away. Tell the lady she can come and see her patient now."

The man withdrew, and soon afterwards Joan Selby came to my bedside, with a face so lined with suffering and so deadly pale withal that she put me in a great fear lest Oliver must have been killed."

"Where is Oliver, and how did I come here?" said I.

"Oh! Thank the merciful God you can speak at last," said she. "I know not where Oliver may be. And only to think of what would have happened if the house watchman had not come here when he did——, but 'twill be time enough to tell you of our troubles when you have more strength to hear them."

But the surgeon told her I had now no fever, and he thought it would rather give me ease of my pain than cause me mischief to hear some of the particulars of how I came to this place. And truly, it is a less fatigue to a weak man to hearken to another's talk than to be framing questions and waiting for the answers.

Not all at once, but part that day, part of it the next, and some of it again later, Joan told me a story that was broken by such outbreaks of convulsive grief as made me stop her more than once in fear for her reason. For clearness I have set it down here in one continuous relation, as follows:—

After I had been run through by Tresham, whom Joan identified soon after, he left me for dead by the bridge and hastened to join the man who was binding her and Oliver: bidding him take them both to the cart as soon as he was finished.

"When you reach the cart, tell that fellow Smith and two others to come to me at the bridge and aid me with the dead," said he: "while I search for Tracey in the river." And he ran down the bank to look for the man I had shot, who had been carried down and across the stream.

The poor prisoners were securely bound as to the upper limbs, but their legs were free to walk: and Tresham told them, before they set off, that if they attempted to run away or shout for help they would be stabbed at once, whereas if they refrained from hindering their custodian their lives would surely be spared.

They were hurried along over the stile (for time was very precious now to the miscreants) and through the big covert till they reached the far end of it next the road. There they were made to climb the fence and follow the road for a couple of furlongs, till they were come to where a big hedge screened a grass field, into which they passed through a gate. Behind the hedge was a cart with a cover to it, stretched over hoops such as gipsies commonly use

for travelling and encamping. There were some gipsies sitting near the cart on the ground, and a man standing by who held two horses: and they all seemed to be complaining and dissatisfied: probably by reason of the injuries two of them had received from me. But they did not speak English.

Joan and Oliver were at once made to get into the cart, and thenceforward they saw nothing, since both back and front of the cover were closed with rough curtains. But they heard more murmuring when their guide bid three of the men go to meet Tresham at the footbridge (one of them saying they had done enough already for their hire) till, being told there would be no more fighting, they went reluctantly.

After an interval, it seems, they all returned, including the gipsy I had disabled with my last blow, bearing Tracey and me amongst them; and then began a wrangle over the burial of the bodies and extra payment for the wounds got by the gipsies. The chief of them said he had enough wounded men to care for, even when their rewards were paid, without having to do the work of sexton as well.

At last it seems to have been settled that the party of gipsies, leaving two of their number behind them, should set off at once, carrying with them the body of Tracey for interment somewhere, while I was put into the bottom of the cart on top of a couple of mattocks and covered over with straw. Of the two remaining gipsies, one led the horse that was yoked to the cart, and the other, who had held the two riding horses, got in beside Joan and Oliver as soon as Tresham and his friend, whose name they did not hear, had mounted.

So they proceeded to the Hereford high road, which, so far as could be guessed from the extreme jolting of the cart, was crossed soon after reaching it, and a westerly direction taken over infamous country roads towards Montgomery, which, however, was avoided.

At nightfall the party stopped for a brief space near an inn which I have since thought to be half a league to the north of Church Stoke, where stands an isolated hedge alehouse, said to be frequented by gipsies, in a lane that would be somewhere near the line of their travel. Here some coarse food was brought and eaten by Oliver but rejected of Joan, who, indeed, seems to have been unconscious at times, having no clear mind of aught but the infinite bone-shaking of the cart, till they reached, about a couple of hours before dawn, the house I was now in.

The gipsies were in the habit of gaining access to the house through an ill-fitting window in the still-room, whose hasp would fall down when the frame was shaken by both hands with some force. And they made use of the kitchen for shelter and cooking on rough nights when their occasions led them into that neighbourhood. They had knowledge, it is supposed, that the house was cared for; but they possessed some means of passing the news from one to another when the servant came, and they were heedful to use it only of nights between his visits.

Following a short delay outside the house while one of the gipsies gained admission into it, Tresham came to the cart and bade Joan descend and enter

the kitchen, where she was placed in a seat. And first her legs and then her arms, which had been freed during the journey, were bound, after she had again refused food that was placed on a table near her.

Even after the passing of all these years my spirit is so deeply stirred, and my hand trembles so exceedingly, as I recall and strive to write down a particular account of this outrage, that I would ask your indulgence to spare myself, and you, too, who may read of it, more disquiet than is expedient. I pass over her piteous farewell to Oliver when it was brought home to the heart-stricken girl that they must be separated in the small hours of that dreadful night.

But at last: "Do you hope for no mercy yourself before the Judgment Seat that you can show none to us who never saw you before nor ever thought to harm you?" said she. Then, goaded to a frenzy of despair, she went on: "It is a brave deed, truly, and one you can boast of to your life's end: for your life will end, be sure of that. And then you, too, may cry in vain for mercy. But what must the blessed Virgin think on such a deed as this? Five or six armed men to set upon one unarmed, with only a weak woman and a child to aid him?"

To which he made answer: "Yes, it is because I hope for mercy that I am doing what gives you pain now, in order to save an immortal soul from hell-fire. As for Charles Repton, his blood is on his own head, and he has slain a truer man than he, and more faithful. I am sorry, too, for the ill-convenience you have brought upon yourself through your rash

devotion to your brother's bodily ease; but if that devotion had been equally true to his spiritual needs, this trouble would not have come to you. You may, however, rest assured, my dear madam, that the boy will be as well cared for where he is going as though he were under your own eye. And when he shall be restored to his family, as to which the date will depend upon the constancy of his father, he will have a steadfast faith in the creed of his ancestors that no misfortune nor persecution may hereafter turn. In less than three hours from now a man will come to release you from your bonds, the necessity for which I much regret, and he will guide you to within a few miles of Welshpool, where you will get conveyance to your home. In the meantime, I may tell you, it will not serve you to call out for help, since there is no dwelling within hail, and such persons as use the road on their lawful occasions journey always by day."

The next minute the man was gone and Joan heard the wheels of the cart going down the avenue.

The rest of this accursed narrative is, perhaps, best told in the words of the caretaker as he related it while tending me in my sickness. The man was Welsh, and such little English as he had was spoken in the sing-song fashion his countrymen affect. I had met none before that time, having lived so short a space near the border: and his quaint speech gave me an amusement that would doubtless have ceased when its newness to me was worn off. But when I came to know what I owed this man, as well in the time of my helplessness as on the account of certain issues of it, I got to love the sound of that talk: so

that to this day the intonation of the Welsh dialect is like the peal of church bells in my ears.

"I scarce know yet what brought you so early to the house that morning, Gwyllam Parry," said I, when I had pieced together some bits of the story I had learnt from Joan.

"Early! It was night, indeed," said the man: "two, three of the clock and very dark. My lord and lady are away from the castle, and he write the steward that he let the place to a tenant, and he must move some of the furniture there from Plas Dolanag. The steward he send for me and ask me if the house be clean: and when I say I dunna know he's very angry and tell me the carts will be at the house at four of the clock whatever, and the place got to be clean then. So I did take a lanthorn and a stick and came over the mountain from the castle. When I got near the cross-road I seen a light, and presently I hear the noise of the mattocks in the earth, and I dunna know what it is. Then the light goes out, as I think they hear me whistling, and then I listen to horses' feet going Welshpool way. Then, indeed, I wait some time before I go to the cross-road and find you lying there dead, aye sure, by the side of the grave they was making. I leave you there till the day and go to the house. When I seen the kitchen door open I go in and find the lady. I had great fear at first, as she look dead like you, till I cut the ropes and throw water on her. I ask her what she doing there, and she tell me the Gyptians and another man steal her brother and leave her in the kitchen. When I said the Gyptians not want to bury a *felo de se* and there must be others with them, she say aye, aye, two men

on horses. But I tell her the dead man look like he belong to the gentry, and she say, let me see: quick, quick. So I take her to the cross-road, and she fall on her knees crying and put her ear close to your face and body, and at last she tell me the man breathes, and we must take him to the house quick and warm him at the fire. So we put you in the bed in the kitchen, and the lady takes plenty food because she have work to do now. The carts came at four of the clock, and she makes them take out the horses and send two men to Welshpool to bring the surgeon and alarm the country. But none seen the robber horsemen nor the Gyptians near Welshpool,' and the lady say they gone that road to deceive me, and must have turned back over the mountain to follow the cart. I say I hear no cart whatever, but the lady say yes there was a cart, and she speak to the steward when he came after eight of the clock, and he tell her it's too late to catch them and they gone to Mallwyd for Dolgelley or Aberdovey, but it's hard job to tell what for, indeed."

Before I had learned one half as much as you already know of this strange affair (indeed at his second visit of which I was conscious) I asked the surgeon if he would send word to George Goldbetter, at Oswestry, and let him know I was in need of him. I did not suppose he could do anything to further the rescue of Oliver Selby from his ravishers, since Tresham had got too long a start before any pursuit was undertaken by the constable of the hundred: and it was to be thought he aimed at shipping with the lad to France, in a vessel at one of the small ports on the Welsh coast. But I was sensible that I lay in a

perplexing situation as regarded Joan Selby, to whom, with Gwyllam Parry, I owed my life under God's mercy. I durst not bid her leave me lest I should seem ungrateful: and when I first touched on the matter, she was for putting me off by saying there would be time enough when I was out of danger. In fact, it was a matter of some reflection how to send her. To go alone with such a dreadful story to tell her parents was more than I could ask her. But it was plain to me that we could not continue to live in this fashion, notwithstanding that the steward of the castle had been so good as to send to the empty house two maids, one of whom did what cooking was needed. Joan told me she had sent a letter to her mother; but I understood it was not till the second day of our sojourn in the place: and who could blame her for such a reasonable delay in all the painful circumstances?

The surgeon, who said he had some acquaintance with Goldbetter, writ him that same day, giving him a particular instruction of the road from Welshpool: and the good lawyer came at once, covering the seven leagues as fast as he could persuade a saddle-horse to bring him.

For all his mirthful face, my old friend was in deep distress to see my case; but, like the man of business he was, he set about, without delay, the consideration of my affairs and the suitable steps to be taken in order that I should not be harassed by care, nor unduly beholden to any in the matter of my captivity. He settled all charges due for services rendered, and arranged with the steward that I should pay a small rent in return for the convenience of the empty house,

and to make up for the time lost in preparing the place for the new tenant. As for getting Oliver back, he put aside the expectation that aught could now be done by force or stratagem: and the matter did not seem to weigh so heavily on his mind as did the thought of what the result of the boy's abduction would be on my future course of life. He led me to conjecture, in fact, that he supposed the lad would be well cared for until we could see Fr. Cornish (of whom he, too, had had no news for a long time), when restitution would be made in due course at his instance. Wherefore I could not doubt that he laid the blame of the kidnapping at the door of the French Jesuits: a postulate that gave me to think and to speak, as you shall presently hear.

With Joan Selby Goldbetter had a long talk, at which I was not present; but he came to my bedside soon after it and: "You will forgive me, Mr. Charles," said he, "but I think Mistress Selby should go home as soon as may be convenient. The difficulty seems to be that she holds it for a duty to remain here till you are well, a very creditable sentiment on her part. But for my own part, I think it is to be desired that she should go so soon as the surgeon can ease her anxiety by pronouncing you to be out of danger."

"It has been my own wish that she should go at once without waiting for the surgeon's assurance," said I; "but I have refrained from pressing her by reason of my fear lest I should seem wanting in gratitude to her for saving my life. And I thought it somewhat harsh to make her go alone."

"Then, with your permission and the surgeon's," said Goldbetter, "I propose to carry her home

to-morrow, returning to you as soon as my mission is fulfilled: and the surgeon can order me a coach in Welshpool to be here against eight of the clock. We may consider that matter settled," he went on; "but, if the talk won't excite you over-much, I should like to have a few words with you touching this abduction, so that I may correctly convey your sentiments on it to Mr. Selby; for I can see it is like to make a pretty stir in the country-side, and in Catholic circles generally, when this tale shall be noised abroad. But what am I to say to the father of Oliver Selby?"

"I have been thinking upon your suspicions, Goldbetter," said I. "And I suppose you want to tell Lucas Selby that I share them. I cannot assent to that. In spite of Tresham's speech to Miss Joan, I entirely refuse to believe that the Paris Jesuits have had a hand in this affair."

"Then, my dear Mr. Charles, have you any conjecture what this man purposes to do with Oliver Selby?" said he.

"No: there I am quite at fault," said I. "Maybe he will but hold him as an hostage against the inconstancy of Lucas Selby to the Catholic faith. That also would seem to have been hinted at by him. But there is no good in asking me what a man like Tresham means to do. Wait till you hear what Fr. Cornish has to say. You have writ him?"

"I have writ him," said Goldbetter; "but that won't help me in my speech to Mr. Selby. I had hoped to have assured him you had broke your connection with this society which, forgive the

freedom of my words, holds you unfit for the priesthood forsooth: and yet delivers you to the guidance of such a man as Tresham!"

"I scarce blame you," said I, "for holding that view of the matter: and, indeed, it is amazing that they should be so easily deceived by the man. But yet I think you cannot expect me to throw over the whole teaching of my life on a suspicion that has no confirmation at present. Of course my occupation is now gone and there is even no need for me to return to Bromley Chase at all; unless it should be to ask pardon of the poor bereaved mistress and ——"

"Permit me to interrupt you for one moment," says he; "in the matter of pardon, you have none to ask of man, woman or child. Yes: you were speaking of giving up the teaching of your life, Mr. Charles?"

"As for that," said I; "such as I am, they at least have made me, Goldbetter. And even if things should be as black as you suppose them, I must not forget how much I shall still owe them for a training which, I doubt not, would admit me now to the secular Catholic priesthood. I take it my first duty, if I am spared, is to seek Oliver Selby: and when I shall have found him and restored him to his mother will be time enough to consider of my duty to the Company of Jesus, and of what share they may have had in this dreadful scandal. If I should have to quit the society, such a step as secular ordination would be the next I could take to fulfil my father's wishes, and my own intention regarding the same, as to a life of celibacy and chastity."

At this moment Joan entered the room and put

an end to that part of our talk which, so silently she came, it was hard to believe she had not overheard.

The surgeon withholding serious objection, Miss Selby and Goldbetter set off next morning on their long coach ride to Bromley Chase: and I was left in the care of Gwyllam Parry and the two maids from the castle. My parting with Joan was a sad one, as was to be expected considering the troubles and pains we had shared, and the loss (even though it might be only temporary) we had sustained of one we both loved. But I was somehow sensible that she made it easier for me, by reason of a diffidence (or shall I say a distance?) of manner to which I had been a stranger since the beginning of our ills by the river at Bromley Chase. It came to me that she had cast off some of the familiar, if not tender, carriage which had marked our intercourse while she waited on me, and was born, haply, of her sympathy with my suffering and of our common distress: and that she had resumed in part the coldness of her former bearing towards me. Her face, too, was surely changed. It looked to me as though it had lost some of the lines of acute suffering I had observed on my first return to consciousness; and in place thereof I thought I saw a calmness of resignation, aye, even of cheerfulness that became her beauty exceedingly, and awoke my admiration of her patience. Perhaps it was but my fancy, for there was no lack of good-will in her farewell.

"May God for ever bless and keep you," she whispered, as she took my hand in both of hers and kneeled by my bedside. As she rose I detained one

of her hands and, carrying it to my lips, said: "Tell your mother I will never rest till I find him."

"I shall tell her, too," said she, "that it was all my fault for not doing as you bid me:" and stooping, she put her lips to my forehead and was gone.

This history assumes, in some parts, the nature of a confession that must be full if it is to obtain the relief of pardon and absolution. I told you at the beginning that I should strive for your favourable judgment on the events as they actually occurred and not as they have been misrepresented; so that I must needs fully acquaint you of all the motives that led to particular actions of mine, if I am to set a real value on your verdict. I must withhold nothing that is material, either for or against me, if I am to disarm the suspicion which attaches to the one-sided historian.

It seems to me now, though it may not have been quite so sudden, that the two had scarce left the empty house when a pair of strange things happened that had some influence, I think, the one on the other: while both affected my sentiments. The one was that, incredible as it may appear, I now for the first time, since my troubles began by the river, recalled to mind the letter I had received from the provincial in Paris, more than a month gone. It is possible that you may have thought of this matter from the moment of Tresham's appearance on the scene, and it is not a little odd that I should have been forgetful of it and failed to connect the two incidents together in my mind. In fact, I cannot myself explain it save on the grounds that I had been too busy to reflect while trying to thwart

Tresham's evil intentions and that, since my hurt, my memory, like my body, had been somewhat disordered. At least, I speak the naked truth when I say I had, till now, forgot all about it. And when it came back to my mind I had some shame of it, inasmuch as I had not informed Goldbetter who might suppose I had withheld the fact of set purpose. For when I came to reflect on it, I could not but see that the lawyer would hold it to be a weighty piece of evidence in proof of the privity of the French Jesuits to Tresham's nefarious wiles. Nay, I saw more than that; for I knew then that unless Fr. Cornish, whom I could never doubt, should be able to clear up the mystery, I myself must become a convert to Goldbetter's suspicions.

The other strange event, of the pair I spoke of, was that I now seemed to be seized by a foolish restlessness I could not at first account for, and a sentiment of dependence I had not known since childhood. The restlessness might well be caused by slow returning health; but the very growth of strength should surely beget the spirit of independence that strives to anticipate release from the trammels and bondage of the sick chamber, and to demonstrate the patient's returning self-reliance. While here was I tossing about with no desire to rise from bed, because it would bring me no nearer, but rather contrariwise might help me to forget, that which I lacked. It was very strange.

I think it took me the better part of the day to learn what that was, and I could not have put the thing into words even then; but I must suppose that I missed the gentle ministrations of Joan Selby

by my bedside. I missed her sweet breath and the touch of her hair on my cheek as she helped Gwyllam Parry to raise me in bed; I must have missed the warm glow from her heaving bosom as she leaned across me to reach the physic from the shelf above; I missed the many acts of healthy self-abandonment that attract the weak patient to his nurse: and I knew that my gratitude and compassion on her grief were turned to a great admiration of her womanly charms. I had been conquered, in fact, by those kindly offices in which maids find joy to forget themselves while they give succour to all in pain and distress and which, I have read somewhere, are their foretaste, if they but knew it, of the maternity they all unconsciously desire.

The effect of this discovery, joined, it is fair to say, with my tardy recollection of the provincial's letter, of which I was to hear more, as you shall presently see, was to bring me for the time into a great discontent with my present course of life. They began to give me fretful doubts whether Goldbetter might not be in the right of it in trying to persuade me to have done with the Jesuits. My position in the order, I thought, was not intelligible nor assured, and was one that hardly satisfied me, now that Oliver Selby was out of my hands. And, albeit Goldbetter did not say so in these very words, it was easy to know he supposed me to be neither fish nor flesh nor good red herring. When you came to consider of it, how should he think otherwise, seeing that I was unable to enlighten his ignorance when he asked me what grade I held? And Fr. Cornish, too, to question whose integrity would have been to

me second only to doubting the sacred truths of my religion: was it not possible that he was easy to be gulled: that he had been beguiled and hoodwinked again by Tresham as he had been once before: nay, always before? For if he had known the man for what he was, how could he have left me, or my father's son at least, in his care? Why, the man had already turned me into a worldling and made me familiar with bloodshed almost on the morrow, so to speak, of quitting a religious seminary: and likely worse might have happened but for the training I had received in that seminary.

Or was there a higher power yet than the provincial, working through him and Cornish and causing the father to be pulled two ways, as Goldbetter had said? A nameless impersonal force as of the majority in a Star Chamber, or of the despot who signs the warrant, prepared by cunning intrigue, without troubling to read its contents and the name of the man whose life it takes? No; that must be set aside as too wicked for belief. But what a dreadful puzzle for a youth, sick and without experience of the world! The riddle that wiser heads than mine have been unable to read through the ages of history: namely, the extent to which authority or power may be diverted, poisoned and misused in the agencies or channels through which it flows from its source towards its application.

But thoughts such as these passed through my brain during the days when I was alone in the empty house, and when my only entertainment was Gwyllam Parry's lessons in the Welsh that got not

much beyond "Good-day" and "Good-night," I do believe.

Two days were passed since the time I had reckoned it would take Goldbetter for his journey to Bromley Chase and return to the empty house: and I was growing weary of waiting and somewhat peevish, as sick men will, when I heard the sound of coach wheels in the avenue and presently he entered my room. I saw at a glance that all was not well, and that he needed more than his habitual mask of hilarity to cover the dejection he was in; so that I became possessed of an ill boding that sometimes haunts the sick chamber despite the favourable progress of disease, and often hinders that progress.

He walked slowly towards my bed and, looking round to make sure there was none in hearing: "How are you doing now, Mr. Charles?" says he.

"Never concern yourself about me, man," said I, hastily. "Come, out with it, Goldbetter."

"I have very bad news," said he, taking a seat.

"No harm is come to Oliver; he is not dead?" said I.

"No, Mr. Charles," said he, "it is not quite so bad as that; but it is bad enough in all truth. Mistress Joan Selby is turned out of her father's house; that is to say, she was refused admittance to it, for she was scarce past the threshold before she was hunted away."

"But who turned her out?" said I, near sick with excitement.

"Why, her own father, to be sure. 'Tis just as I say," said Goldbetter.

"What is the meaning of this," I cried; "is all the world gone mad together?"

"You may well ask," says he: "and yet I suppose some allowance must be made for the man, though mad he is just now: and raging mad at that."

"I suppose you mean Lucas Selby," said I, still quite bewildered.

"Yes," said Goldbetter: "I had practised, as I came along, how to break this news to you in the shortest; but the infernal jolting of that coach has left me without a wholesome bone in my body, I think: and it has made me lose the sequence of the story."

"A plague take the sequence, Goldbetter," said I, growing fretful and impatient. "What made Selby turn his daughter from the house?"

"Well, there you are," says he; "but you must give me time to tell the story right. If I am to inform you out of hand in one phrase, I should say it was a concatenation of the most untoward hazards that ever confronted an irritable father, aggravated by the finding of a letter that was as damnable a stimulant to jealous suspicion as if the devil himself had writ it. Forgive the violence of my language, Mr. Charles; but it gives me a measure of relief and you to perceive there is something to be said in excuse of the man."

"You can't mean that he found the provincial's letter to me?" I cried, in a horror.

"That's it," said he: "and I think all else might have been smoothed over, as how should it not, seeing that none but Tresham has harmed Mr. Selby. But that letter, I protest, was a sad stumbling block to me. I could not explain it sith I had no knowledge of it. You never mentioned it to me. And, though I refused to read it when he thrust it at me,

the lunatic must needs bellow its contents into my ear till I thought he had like to deafen me: and the trouble was that, when I heard it, I could not but perceive what a case he seemed to have against you. But ——"

"I give you my word, Goldbetter," said I, breaking in, "that the letter never crossed my thoughts till after you were gone from the house; or I would have told you of it. When I first got it I was for riding over to Oswestry to show it you and tell you your evil prophecy was come true. But I thought, for sure, you would be urging me to quit Bromley Chase at once; and, frankly, that step did not suit me and would not have been just, I thought, to Oliver Selby. I returned no answer to the letter, and now I see that I was in the wrong of it. That is the whole story."

"You might at least have destroyed it, Mr. Charles," said he; "but that's where it is. You suspect no guile in others and therefore you think that none can mistrust your honour. And this time you have been properly betrayed. However, my story will not take long now, I think. As we came away from the house we found Miss Edith Selby lying in wait for her sister at the lodge gate, and she gave us a full narrative of her father's return home from Leominster—I think the place was. You and Miss Joan and Oliver were gone near two days when he arrived, and not a soul about the place could conjecture where. There was no clue of any kind."

"'Tis strange," said I, "that they did not find the fish baskets and Oliver's rod."

"The knaves must have hidden them or thrown them into the river," said he; "since there was nothing found to show which way you were gone. They scoured the country for twelve miles round and got many horsemen to help in the search. But, as you know, Tresham had too long a start, and none suspected the gipsies to have had a hand in such a weighty affair. At last Mr. Selby made search in your room, where the letter was found by a serving man in one of your coat pockets; and then he came near to demented. He justified the reading of a private letter by saying that the man who had stolen his son and daughter was an enemy against whom all weapons are lawful. Then came Mistress Selby's letter to her mother, who has taken the affair bravely, and declares that all will come right in time. But neither his daughter's letter nor aught else would turn Lucas Selby to reason."

"I should say he had never been a man of any parts," he went on: "and now he appears to have lost what little sense he had. He got it into his head, at first, that you had run away with his daughter, and taken Oliver with you to prevent the alarm being raised too soon; a very senseless notion, all considered. When the letter was found he still thought you had eloped, but had carried the boy away from the risk of apostasy: and now it is hard to say what he supposes. But according to Miss Edith, he is under the impression, or so I apprehend, that the plot to kidnap Oliver was carried out by you, assisted by his daughter, and instigated by the Jesuits."

Goldbetter paused to let his story have due weight, and then continued: "It seems he received the letter I had writ to tell him we were coming but a few

hours before we were there: and he must have been waiting for us, since the door was no sooner opened to us than he sprang out from his library and, with no warning, bade Miss Selby return whence she came. 'You are no daughter of mine,' says he.

"'Father,' said she: 'is this the way you greet me?' And then she made matters a deal worse, poor soul, by adding, 'twas all my fault, I know; if I had but done what Mr. Repton bade me, Oliver would have been with us now.'

"At that I thought the man would have struck her: 'You dare to tell me,' he roared, 'that you did not help to carry him away, and don't know where he is? Begone! Go back to your paramour and tell him I'll take the horsewhip to him if I catch him near my house again.'

"The man said much more that I will not repeat, and was so violent in his demonstrations that I feared for the young lady's safety: and at last I invited her to go back to the coach while I tried to reason with her father. But I might as well have tried to reason with a mad dog. 'I presume, sir,' said I, 'that you will, at least, lend me a hearing in order to explain to you that the grievous nature of my client's wound alone prevents him from being here in person ——'

"'Oh! explain away, sir,' says he, 'as much as you please. I would your client had been here, if you mean Mr. Repton, and then, perhaps, I might have got some satisfaction of him. That is, if he does not add cowardice to his other intriguing blemishes.'

"'Mr. Charles Repton,' said I, 'now lies wounded

in a house the other side of Welshpool. His hurt was got in a fight to prevent your son being kidnapped. Your words shame you, sir, for, although there were three or four armed men against him, he succeeded in recovering possession of the boy when——'

"'I care not a fig for his grievous wounds,' he shouted. 'No doubt the knaves fell out among themselves and maybe he got no more than his deserts. Look you here, sir; I know not who you are nor why you come hither; but I tell you at once you are not going to convince me, against the evidence of my own senses, that this pious scholar is not at the bottom of all this mischief. The man is a spy, sir; that's what he is, and he's turned my daughter into one likewise, upon her own father, too. Read that letter, sir, and I'll trouble you to explain it before you wander any further into your client's wounds.'

"Thereupon he produced the letter, as I have told you. When he had roared through it, I had no answer to give him; so I told him there was no profit to be got of that unseemly shouting. At that he stood at bay for a space, for all the world like some wild beast; and then, lowering his voice, he asked me quite calm if I could deny the letter was writ to you, and whether the Jesuit provincial was the man to send it to any but such as would carry out his instructions. I told him that, if he would but wait for your explanation, I was sure you would satisfy him you had acted honourably towards him. But, dear me, that letter would have been a dreadful hindrance to an understanding with anyone named

in it: and, to a man so blindly enraged as Lucas Selby at the loss of his son, it was like a cataplasm or a blister. He would not forget it for a moment, and whatsoever way I tried to turn the argument, he brought it round again to that accursed epistle and asked me to explain it."

"And where did you take Joan in the end?" I asked, when he got so far with the story.

"Now I come to perhaps the most irksome and delicate part of my mission," said Goldbetter. "When I found that nothing would avail to make Mr. Selby hearken to reason, and Mrs. Selby was not to be seen, I could not leave the poor young lady at the door like a gift of venison. It was plain that she could not make a permanent home in the coach; neither could I take her to my own house with any regard for its good repute; so that I was quite distraught to know what to do with her, till I thought of Mrs. Margaret Buxton, my good friend, the widow, who lives by Oswestry."

"You might have taken her to her great-uncle at Leominster," said I.

"I asked her if she had any kinsfolk to whom she wished to go," said he. "She said she could call none to mind; but begged me to leave her at the inn at Church Stretton and have done with the burden of her. She was overwhelmed with grief, which is scarce to be wondered at: and shame of her father's ill-behaviour, for which the poor girl was nowise accountable, seemed to deprive her of clear thought. When her sister appeared at the lodge I hoped some way out of the difficulty might be concerted; but Miss Edith would have none of the inn scheme: and

was for getting her away from the neighbourhood and out of sight and reach of their father's wrath, which she thought might abate in a few weeks' time. She, too, it is to be supposed, was so much upset that she could give me no sensible counsel where to take her sister. But then she is little more than a child, though a comely one. 'Take her to Mr. Repton,' says she. 'He will know what to do until this trouble shall be blown over and Oliver found.' But I told her you were lying on the flat of your back in bed and not like to stir abroad for some time yet. And then I perceived I must rely on my own judgment in this perplexity and put no trust in female wits that were so callow as not to know a young man contemplating the priesthood, and his bachelor lawyer, were scarce the most convenient persons to conduct this affair."

"Well, then you took her to Oswestry?" said I, growing somewhat impatient over this long discourse.

"Yes, Mr. Charles, I posted with her to Mrs. Buxton's," says he: "and when we were come to the house I hardly durst go in to ask her hospitality, from fear of what the neighbours might think."

"Why man, you make as much pother about it as if you were a young spark of twenty," said I. "Surely the lady would find no trouble in understanding the position?"

"No doubt she would," says Goldbetter: "and if I could have named a date that would put a period to her stay with Mrs. Buxton, the matter were as simple as sinning. But I can see no end to this visit of Mistress Selby."

"I don't think that need give you any concern,

Goldbetter," said I. "Of course, I intend to be at the costs of all this business. 'Tis a small return, at the most, for the debt of my life which I owe: and I will see Mrs. Buxton myself about it when I shall be abroad again."

"The point did not trouble me a bit," said Goldbetter; "but you cannot well employ the town crier to proclaim that a certain lady from the other side of the county has been disowned by her father, and must needs take refuge in Oswestry. The point which does trouble me is that, for all the years I have lived in the place, I have been known as a bachelor who did not meddle in any female affairs whatsoever, except in so far as they came within the practice of his legal profession: and now the gossips' tongues are like to wag."

"Their tongues may wag," said I: "and that's not going the length of saying they really believe you could seriously contemplate changing your estate at your time of life. Why there must be near forty years betwixt your age and Miss Joan Selby's, if not more."

I spoke like the foolish youth I was that counts all men old who are more than forty years of age: and moreover, I was exceeding nettled that he should think it possible their names could be coupled together, in that sense, by tatlers.

But the soft answer again turned away sick-bed wrath, as he meekly replied: "Perhaps I have made too much of the affair, Mr. Charles; but the difference is not so great as you say, and my excuse must be that I have been assured the female gossips won't spare a bachelor of what age soever until he is in his grave."

CHAPTER IX

IN DEFENCE OF THE COMPANY OF JESUS

BEFORE the end of May was come I was out of the surgeon's hands, and Goldbetter carried me to his house at Oswestry. The sword-thrust I got from Tresham, in its passage through my body, had followed almost the exact direction of my former wound, which, by a miracle, had missed both heart and lungs. So that, when it was healed, I suffered from no permanent weakness nor loss of vitality, and I think its most notable effect on me was but to mark an epoch in my life from which other events came to be dated.

Fr. Cornish was abroad when Goldbetter had writ to tell him of Oliver Selby's abstraction; and when we were come to Oswestry there was waiting a letter from him to Goldbetter, dated from Deal in Kent, which said that he would follow the letter as fast as might be to Oswestry. The next day the father appeared, and as soon as I had set eyes on him I knew that Goldbetter had properly described him to me in the autumn last past as a miserable man. There were dark rings about his eyes which were sunk deep in his head, and he was at the call of a nervous restlessness that was uncomfortable to watch, and had changed the whole demeanour of the man since I had last seen him, near ten months gone.

In fact, there was that in his bearing so pitiful that my heart bled for my kind old guardian, and, albeit no words passed betwixt the lawyer and me on the point, there was a tacit understanding that the priest must not be hard pressed.

But there was no need to press him. On the subject that was uppermost in our minds the father was as eager as we were that all the facts should be brought to light. And, to you who have heard how I had already assisted at strife and bloody riot, I declare that the interview which follows was more painful to me than all the fighting.

I left it to Goldbetter to begin the talk, and: "This is a sad and shameful affair," said he; "and I am glad you are come so soon, because I know not how long I shall be able to keep Mr. Charles, who is for setting out on the instant in search of Oliver Selby. We have no surmise where in the wide world the boy is gone, and it might help to narrow the field of search if you could inform us, for certain, of the attitude of the Society of Jesus towards this unlawful abduction:" and he told Fr. Cornish the whole tale as you know it. When he came to the provincial's letter to me that I had never answered, he plainly disclosed his suspicions that the kidnapping was due to the fears of the French Jesuits, lest Lucas and Oliver Selby might turn Protestant.

The poor priest moved nervously in his chair once or twice (notably when the provincial's letter was mentioned), and his lips twitched as with a yearning to be over and done with a painful subject. And yet he replied in a manner both laboured and slow, as who should weigh, and let us weigh, every word he

spoke. His eyes were brimming with moisture as: "I am here to enlighten you all I can," said he; "and I am prepared to give you and Charles a full and true account of my stewardship. If I have erred, I shall ask for pardon, though I think God knows I have acted according to my conscience. If there shall be some things I cannot explain, it will be through my own ignorance, and from no design to withhold what I think you should know. I can scarce say where I should begin, unless I go back to the days at St. Omer; but, before I cast back so far, I would ask Charles for more precise information touching the letter from the provincial, which distresses me more than I can say. When did you get it?"

"More than a month ago," said I.

The father winced as though from the stroke of a whip, and: "Have you had any letters from him before or since? Or from others in 'Ours' since you quitted Paris?" said he.

"None from any," said I.

He paused in deep thought before he went on, now addressing us both: "A man who would serve God truly in the Company of Jesus," said he, "must have neither father, mother, brother nor sister; no, nor yet an orphan ward whom he loves first for his parents' sake, and then for the boy's own winning truth and cleanliness of heart, till he becomes dearer than a son. This has been my sin against the discipline of the order; the iron discipline of a chosen army that will brook no relaxation of its rules in favour of any of its soldiers and officers. I, poor fool, thought I could have a new and separate

discipline for Charles Repton; and how am I punished?"

He looked round for a moment as though he feared an onlooker, and went on in a lower tone: "My penance is that I risk the loss of his esteem by making known to him now the severity of that discipline from which I sought to shield him, at St. Omer and after."

"No, Fr. Cornish; never," said I. "Whatsoever you may have to say, what mistakes soever may have been made, I know you for a true man, and my esteem you will never lose."

"Hear me to the end, Charles," said he. And again there was a long pause before he resumed his speech. "I think I must have set my will against that of Almighty God," said he. "It seems to me now, though I knew it not at the time, that I but lent the lad to the order, with reservations, and did not offer him as the free gift he was to the Father-General as the steward of Christ. You, perhaps, Mr. Goldbetter, may comprehend my motives in this, since it is possible you may have wrought an influence on them?"

You may think it strange, as I did; but Goldbetter nodded his head in agreement.

"His father's will," Cornish went on, "left no doubt of his intentions, beyond the saving clause touching undue pressure; but still it seemed to me possible the testator might not have known the whole sum of what he designed for Charles. So that, when it came to taking the step, I fear I may have turned it into a barter, and, unwittingly, I bartered for Charles's money his own immunity from some of

the sternness of the discipline enjoined. Am I open enough, Mr. Goldbetter?"

The lawyer again nodded assent.

"If so," Fr. Cornish resumed, "I can turn to the other explanations. For some years all went well at St. Omer, and reports came to me that the boy was industrious and intelligent far beyond the ordinary. But he had the habit of reasoning out moral problems for himself and, albeit he did not contradict his teachers, he accepted their solutions of these problems rather as interesting speculations than in the attitude of credulity he displayed towards the mysterious truths of our faith. Then came the news of his first rebellion, which, in my opinion, was the direct outcome of his early life and training, and disclosed traits that should be no hindrance to his later usefulness to the order, if speed could be made with the novitiate. Here, I thought, was a character that would be an ornament to us and a mighty power for good in our counsels in years to come, if he should live to hold high grade; and I urged a still milder administration of discipline.

"But my colleagues thought different, and held that the metal whose temper would not yield the blindest obedience, at once, would be useless hereafter unless beaten in the furnace; and when his second rebellion took place, there were two customary courses to follow; namely, penal subjugation of the spirit or dismissal, whereby, in this case, the wealth of the aspirant would be lost to the company.

"You, Mr. Goldbetter, who are a man of the world by profession; can you blame the order for having regard to the latter consideration? It is a

hard necessity that every spiritual organisation in the world must needs have one of its pillars of support made of earthly materials: or, if you prefer it, one of the sides of its frame so constructed as to resist the world's buffets and the pressure of the outbuildings that should spring from it. And so it is with the Company of Jesus. How else could the main edifice support the growth of its dependencies over Europe, in America, aye, and even in far China? The society must have power to spread and repel attack: and without money there is no earthly power. Ask the ruined nobleman who has to sell his land and castle, put down his retainers, and yield his place at Court whether he has any but a counterfeit power left; whether he retains any real privilege that is not shared by the humblest of his former tenants. And do we members use the power for our own personal advancement?"

"No," murmured Goldbetter: "no man can say that."

"Can you blame us, then," said Cornish, "for striving after rich men? Was the sorrowful ruler who asked Christ how he could inherit eternal life rejected on the account of his riches? And was he not invited to follow when he should be rid of them? Neither do the Jesuits reject the rich man: and if they take the postulant's money, is it not spent for the greater glory of God by the society in which he is himself merged? If the ruler had obeyed the divine command he, too, must needs have had others to help him distribute his riches. So much for the money; now for the discipline.

"The company is formed on the same plan as any

military body, whose regularity and compactness for fighting cannot be maintained save by a discipline so stern that many are frightened by it into desertion. From morning to night the soldier is subject to what, in other walks of life, would be deemed espionage. No true soldier would so call it; but he must march, bear arms, and perform duties precisely at the moment and in the manner prescribed by his superiors, to the end that he may become a worthy part of a great machine. His behaviour is always under observation, and every irregularity is reported to an authority, high or low, according to the gravity of his offence; but nothing is overlooked.

"It is the same with the Jesuit. He must move, like the soldier, the instant he is ordered. He, too, must work and pray to order: must obey and report. It cannot be otherwise with him (as with the good soldier) than that he may have, we all have, to say at times what would be deplored in other circumstances and to do at times that which would be contemned in those who lead another manner of life. This is the fact of which our enemies make so much: and why? Because they are wilfully ignorant that the soldier's pity and compassion hinder him not in his duty when he is sent to capture the deserter whose life may be forfeit for his sin, not against society but, against the select body of which he is a member. Yet none blames the soldier for carrying out this painful duty: and why should the Jesuit be despised for obeying the orders of his superior?

"Still, I would fain have spared Charles much of this discipline (you now know why), thinking his character was such that he would come to see the

necessity to the order of these rules without having submitted to a tedious apprenticeship therein.

"I have said that the second rebellion left two courses open by custom; but I advocated a third. I wished to withdraw from him the burden of discipline for a time, in the hope that what were held by his teachers to be flaws in his character might be planed away after some contact with the world. If I should prove to be in the right he could return to his preparation for the priesthood in the order; and if not, then I should have carried out his father's wishes to the best of my power and he would be morally free to adopt another line of life, without this talk of dismissal or expulsion, which had been to me an unforeseen trouble.

"But here I was opposed by arguments that it would serve no purpose to repeat in full. They were lengthy and protracted, and the conflicting interests could not be reconciled save by concessions on both sides: and maybe you would say another bargain was struck. But the upshot of the concessions was that Charles must needs make contact with the world through a trusted friend or agent of the order; so that he might still remain under the shadow of its authority.

"You thus see how he came under the care of Mr. Francis Tresham; while the concessions made to me were that Tresham should have no spiritual authority over him: that the vows usually made at the end of the novitiate should be again postponed: that he should not be called upon to make reports nor to do anything which might be held to be in the nature of espionage if done by a layman: and fourthly——"

Here the poor father stopped for a while, and the twitching of his lips was so painful to watch that, excited though my feelings were, I turned away my gaze from him.

Presently he went on, as though without effort: "The fourth concession lies with the papers in the packet I gave you, Mr. Goldbetter, at my last visit. Could you lay hands on it without trouble?"

We sat in Goldbetter's office: and at this the lawyer rose from his seat, and, reaching from a shelf above his head a tin box bearing my initials painted on the side, proceeded to unlock it with one of a bundle of keys that lay on the table beside him. He drew from the box a thick packet, heavily sealed, which he handed to Fr. Cornish, who, before he opened it, held it in front of me long enough for me to read the words, "To be opened only after my death," writ large along the cover. The father broke the seals with trembling fingers and withdrew from the other documents a parchment, which he read as follows:—

"'Jean Baptiste Cavalerus, Provost of the Company of Jesus, in the Province of France, to all persons to whom it may appertain and to whom these presents shall come, greeting in our Lord Jesus Christ. I give you to understand that although the bearer hereof has lived a certain time in our company, yet he was not professed, and upon some good considerations moving his guardian to request it, we have frankly and freely dismissed and set him at liberty from anything that might tie him to our society. In witness whereof we have made him this passport under our own handwriting and sealed it with the

seal of our society. Given at Paris the . . . .' The date was left for me to fill in if I should ever hold it necessary, a mark of confidence that assured me the provisions of the other concessions would be faithfully adhered to. But it would seem that, by writing the letter you describe to Charles, the provincial has not kept the third provision of the bargain, and this point adds much to my distress. We must, however, give them time to explain everything before passing judgment: and I will say no more at present under that head, save telling you it was in order to keep that compact inviolable, from my side, too, that I have writ but short letters to Charles for many months last past, and purposely absented myself from Bromley Chase since I heard rumours of a contemplated apostasy. I would have him work for the society in his own straightforward way without let, hindrance or even hints from any holding high grade in it. It came to me, too, that if the healthy influence of his simple faith in our creed, joined to the ministrations of the secular clergy in Shrewsbury, should not avail to avert apostasy in the Selby family, nothing that man might do would save them.

"But you will say I have not yet answered your question touching the attitude of the company towards this shameful ravishment. Well, I am coming to that now. While I hold that your suspicions are in a measure justified by the letter, which it is deplorable Charles acquainted neither you nor me of before this catastrophe occurred, I take upon myself to deny that Tresham had any authority whatsoever from the company for this cruel act. I writ at

once when I heard of it from you to the Father-General and the provincial in Paris, praying that restitution may be instantly made, if the order have any power over the man that committed the crime. And, so soon as I shall hear that the company has knowledge of the boy's whereabouts, I design to proceed without delay to the spot to receive him from his custodians."

"And I will go with you, Fr. Cornish," said I.

"I am not prepared to deny," he went on, "by reason of my ignorance, although I would not give it credit without proof, that some member of the company may have said, in Tresham's hearing, it was to be regretted Oliver Selby could not be removed from harm's way. There may have been some indiscretion somewhere. I cannot say, seeing I know nothing: and, as I have already told you, the letter causes me much distress, as showing carelessness, if nothing more. But to ask me to believe that this work of violence, rapine and bloodshed was instigated or supported by a responsible member of the Company of Jesus is to ask me to abandon the hard work and devotion of a lifetime."

"If that be so," says Goldbetter: "then all you have to fear; all we need fear is lest the society should again throw the mantle of its protection round the shoulders of this villain."

During the latter part of the father's speech Goldbetter had been making notes on a sheet of paper, which he now picked up from the table and held in front of him.

"In the interests of our ward," said he, "and to complete your very candid story, Fr. Cornish, I must ask you one or two questions on this strange affair."

"I told you I was here to enlighten you," said the other, "and I have to thank you for not having interrupted me before. In such a long history it is to be expected that I have omitted much that I should have said; and I want to tell you all."

"I hardly think there is much omitted," said Goldbetter; "but perhaps you may remember telling me, when Mr. Charles left St. Omer, that you knew but little of this man Tresham: and that little was in his favour. Now, apart from what you have told me of him, he only comes before my notice as one who moves about the world with a supreme contempt for its laws and a singular prédilection to welter in other people's blood. Who is this man that he should have had control over Mr. Charles so long?"

"I may be much to blame: I fear I am," said the priest; "but I know scarce any more about him than when we last spoke of him. The source, however, of his influence in the society lies at the fountain head. He was formerly a very intimate friend of the Father-General, and I have heard they are some way connected by blood. For the rest, he has a high and honourable parentage in England or Ireland, and is said to have devoted large sums to the endowment of the order."

"But does the man belong to the society, as I understand he claims?" said Goldbetter.

"You must not suppose," says Cornish, "that I am withholding from you aught in deceit when I say I do not know. This is likewise one of the points our enemies delight to taunt us with, but the cause of this sometime mystery is the rapid growth of the

order and the divers countries, with different tongues, in which our work is pushed. The answer to that question can only come from a knowledge of his previous connection with the society. If I speak by rule, he is not a member unless he is under our vows; but there are exceptions, and you have just seen that in contemplating his possible resignation, a discharge was necessary for Charles, who had not made his vows. Perhaps Tresham has been an aspirant, like Charles, and was found, or found himself to be, unsuitable for the priesthood. He may have made the vows of a temporal coadjutor, and would belong to the order, while employed solely in the authorised work of the society. When it is remembered how many places in Europe there are where the novitiate can be served, it will be understood that none but the superiors in these places, or the Father-General, would be certainly acquainted with the particulars of many postulants. But now I shall make it my duty, when I have spoken to the provincial in Paris, to visit Rome as soon as may be, and lay the whole matter before the General."

"By my way of thinking," said Goldbetter, "you were better for a rest from all these journeys, if so be you can get Oliver Selby back without them. I can conceive that, in a large organisation like that of the society, with but one central authority, there might at times be difficulty in resolving such a man's precise footing; but sure a letter to the General would at any time have cleared up the mystery?"

"That is so," said Fr. Cornish, "if the mystery demanded solution. But there was no mystery till now; there is none in the spectacle of a law-abiding

man being interested in the order, when it is known that he is a friend of the General, and has given his fortune to that order."

"Then I would ask you to recall to mind that meeting we had when you came to propose the plan of Mr. Charles going to Bromley Chase," said Goldbetter. "You may remember I was anxious for him to leave Paris by reason of my fear lest he should be mixed up in some Jacobite scheme: and therefore I agreed to your proposal. But it appeared to me, at the time, that you were no less anxious to get him away. Had you no suspicions then of Tresham?"

"None whatsoever," said Cornish. "My desire to get him away was due in part to your warning of the grave danger to his property of a Jacobite Charles Repton; and in part to the odd news I heard of his life in Paris. It is true I heard no ill of Charles; but I thought temptation could not be far off, if not hard by, when men spoke of his swordsmanship at Lagaraye's Academy being the talk of the town."

"A renown his poor father, at his latter end, would scarce have desired for him, eh?" said Goldbetter. "Yes: that is quite plain. But now I come to the last question that has puzzled me. How did he escape your suspicions when Mr. Charles, here, told you he had been stabbed (and that behind) in Tresham's presence at this infamous club, or whatsoever it was?"

"That is a question I have put to myself many times since I had your letter telling me of this ravishment," said the father. "You cannot upbraid me more than I upbraid myself. It was not a question of doubting Charles's word: that I could never do.

And in fact, I asked the surgeon whether the patient's memory could be trusted, by custom, as to occasions before such a terrible illness. The man told me the answer must depend entirely on the frame and constitution of the patient; but hallucinations were not unknown. Still, the facts are these. I went to the provincial as soon as might be with the story, and he writ to invite Tresham to the college, where we saw him together. He assured us, in an excitement that none could say was assumed, that the very notion was but the wild imagination of a fevered brain: easy of disproof, since he had half-a-dozen witnesses to show he was not near the club till late in the afternoon, when, entering from the back, he found Charles in a pool of blood in the court. He protested that he was willing, nay desirous, to submit to any enquiry the provincial might wish to institute; but he warned him that probing into the matter had like to bring to light facts which were better not raked up against one that was under the authority of the Company of Jesus. He said he would keep a sharper eye for the future on Charles, who had evidently been led astray on the account of his proficiency at the sword-play. And you are to remember his two companions in the fight were both gone from Paris a few days before Charles told me the story. But Tresham must be the very incarnation of evil, or else mad."

"Well, he has made Mr. Lucas Selby mad, any way," said Goldbetter; "but that is all I need to ask."

With that the lawyer got up from his chair and walked across to where Fr. Cornish sat. He took the poor old priest by the hand and shook it long and warmly. And then I somehow knew that the

armed truce of all these many years betwixt the two men was turned into an alliance.

When he writ both the General and the provincial Fr. Cornish had given an address in London, to which he begged them to send their replies: and he was wishful to get there betimes, so that there might be no more delay than needful in acting upon any instructions the replies might contain. The answer of the provincial would, in the common course, be by far the earlier to come; but if it should bring favourable information, there might be no need to tarry further for a letter from the General before moving. Since I, too, held it for my first duty to be instant in the search for Oliver Selby and, if need be, assist in carrying him home when found, it was agreed that the father and I should travel to London together and there await events.

You will not be astonished that the close air of Goldbetter's office oppressed me heavily at the end of this unpleasant talk and gave me a yearning to breathe more freely in the open again. I lacked space in the little room wherein to let my unfettered imagination wander for a time, since I had got more food for thought (and not all of it quite wholesome) than I could well digest. So, excusing myself to my guardians, I left them at their talk and went out to bear the news of Fr. Cornish's coming to Mistress Joan Selby, who would be fretting to hear what he had to say about her brother's case.

Goldbetter had indicated to me in the morning the direction of Mrs. Buxton's house that was easy to discover; since it lay but a short distance from the town on high ground to the north-east, which is

swept by every wind that blows under heaven. Albeit there was no wind that afternoon and the road was wet from a recent rain.

I said that not all the food given me for thought by the meeting of Cornish and Goldbetter was wholesome; but I chose the wholesome just now, not from any sentiment of virtue, but because, contrary to custom, it chanced to be the more palatable.

It is sometimes given to young folk, though they most ways fail to perceive the value of it, to have an opportunity of beholding the positions they occupy in the world pretty clearly, by hearkening to the conversation of their elders that is carried on in their presence and about their concerns. On this occasion it had been revealed to me, with an accuracy I should myself have never attained, that I must have been a well-nigh intolerable burden to my guardians and particularly to Fr. Cornish. It was a fascinating subject of thought: since, in all humility, I did not see how I could have mended matters. For, apart from having been wilful at St. Omer, headstrong and very foolish in many things since, notably in my recent conduct touching the provincial's letter, I could not call to mind that I had ever run directly counter to their expressed injunctions.

If my rebellions at St. Omer were but youthful indiscretions, why was I not chid accordingly by Fr. Cornish and chastened by a more rigorous discipline? Again, if they were serious offences, why had I been humoured, in a manner of speaking? It seemed a strange miscalling of names to describe that as training which allowed the pupil to dictate how much discipline and restraint he would bear.

Why, even a horse should not be allowed his head till he learns to carry the bit with patience.

This point was puzzling me when I reached the house: and, being informed that Mistress Selby was gone into the town and was expected back shortly, I decided to return the way I came and meet her.

The notion of comparing my training with that of a horse was enticing, too, insomuch that I dwelled on it again as I turned away towards Oswestry. I bethought me of the diverse methods men employ to break the beast. Some, like Mr. Oswald of Carlton, exercise an infinite patience with a young horse, and use it as tenderly as a child till it knows fully what the breaker requires of it. Others, again, begin at once to exasperate and terrify the animal by way of shortening its training because, if the truth were known, they really fear the poor beast: and they end by strangling its intelligence and making it unhandy for saddle and draught.

What was that phrase? Yes: I had it at last: "strangle the intelligence." That was evidently what Cornish and Goldbetter would not let them do to me. They were not to be allowed to strangle my intelligence. Of course, I saw it all now. That was why my rebellions at St. Omer were grave offences to my superiors and trivial indiscretions to my guardian. That was the meaning of poor Fr. Cornish's bargain that had cost him so much pain and well-nigh broke his heart. This was what they both thought, honest men, that my father might not have foreseen the whole sum of. But what a pitiful censure on the training methods of the Company of Jesus by one who had served it faithfully all these

years! Of course Goldbetter had constantly urged me to quit the society, and I had set that down, in part, to his being an heretic; but here was Fr. Cornish with my discharge ready made out. Come: would it not be better to accept it and own, once for all, I could never be the sapless stalk, the corpse, or the small crucifix turned about at the will of him who holds it, that the Jesuits wanted to make me?

I now saw Joan Selby coming towards me with a spring in her step and a straight carriage that spoke to her recovery from her fatigues. The sight at once brought to my mind the sufferer's needs in the sick chamber and all her tender care of me in the empty house, with such a revulsion of sentiment that I perceived at long last what the freedom I craved might mean for me. As she came nearer I saw she had some colour in her face that otherwise bore the appearance of cheerful resignation I had observed in it at our parting. And she greeted me with an evident pleasure as she enquired after my wound, which I assured her was well.

"Fr. Cornish is here," said I: "and I am come to give you his news. He knows no more than we where they have taken Oliver; but I think he has no doubts about his speedy surrender to his family, and he has writ the Father-General and the provincial in Paris to the end that, if the company have any power over Tresham, we may expect him back before very long."

"I hope he mayn't be too sanguine," said she.

"He is much distraught over the affair," said I, "and he returns to London in three days to be the readier to set out to fetch Oliver when there shall be

any news." But I told her naught of the talk we had just had about the Company of Jesus; for I held it to be in the nature of a private communication that no way concerned her.

"And what will you do?" said Joan.

"I bear the father company," said I. "I am more like to get information by keeping near him than by tarrying here. I had designed to go first to Bromley Chase to see your father; but Goldbetter holds that no good can come of it and possibly ill would result, until I have news of Oliver to give him; and I am inclined to think he is in the right. I should not fear his violence if I could persuade him to reason; but there is no use in going there to aggravate his wrath for nothing."

"No: you must not go there: I pray you not," said she in a haste; and then added with a smile, "at least, I think you were best away from him; not but what my mother would rejoice to see you, and so would Edith. I have letters from them both and they say my father is become quieter and has even enquired where I am: so it is best to leave well alone for a while." "But oh! Mr. Repton, promise me one thing," she went on, again in a flurry: "you won't fight him! No matter what provocation he may give, if you should chance to meet him anywhere, which God forbid, you will not draw on him: promise me that one thing; you must: and I will ask no more of you!"

"That is a promise easily given, Miss Selby," said I: "and easily kept, too, for you must know I am not a fighting man by inclination and should be mighty glad of the excuse of a promise made to evade hostilities with any man!"

"It amuses you to say so," said Joan, evidently relieved by my answer; "but you cannot think I will ever believe you are a coward."

"A coward is an ugly word," said I: "and we try not to think of it when we confess our timidity to ourselves. But I am timid, Miss Joan, maybe from lack in experience and from my later education; and, so far, I have found no great pleasure in danger and strife, with one exception."

"One would scarce suppose it to see you in a fight," said she, smiling. "But when was the exception?"

"When I had Tresham by the throat that day on the river's edge," said I. "The desire to choke him, and the power to do it, were such a joy as I had never known before and shames me yet when I consider of it. Indeed, so great was the pleasure of it that I marvel now how I ever came to release the man: and yet it would seem to have been better for us all if I had killed him outright. But I know not why I should trouble you with this idle talk when I have other things to say."

"It does not trouble me, Mr. Repton: it interests me exceedingly," said she: "as how should it not, seeing I have lost my only brother through this man's wickedness. Why should you feel shame of nearly doing that which would have saved us all this grief?"

"It is not hard to explain, I think," said I. "For many years I was taught to try and check even unruly thoughts: and, though I failed of course, I know the teaching was right. It must needs be that we have often to do harsh and violent deeds to meet the evil others strive to work upon us: and do not misunder-

stand me, Miss Joan: I have no shame of having tried to choke the man; but it cannot be right to have pleasure in the doing of it."

"I think your conscience is too tender," said she. "If you had lost a brother and a home through that man, perhaps you would have less shame of your eagerness to kill him."

She spoke with such a depth of sorrow that my compassion on her affliction entirely mastered all my wonted constraint, and gave me speech which was new to me and so strange that I seemed to be some other, holding forth in a foreign tongue; though I but spoke the universal language that has come down to us from Adam.

I had turned to walk back with her, and we had quitted the high road to follow a footpath she showed me that led across some ripening meadows to the house. The hedges were white with hawthorn bloom and the smell of the May-flower, mixed with that of the trodden grass after a shower, invaded the nostrils with the familiar intrusion of privileged friends.

"I think your case is a cruel hard one," said I: "and if it lies in me to make some amends for my share in bringing about your distress, I need not speak of the happiness it would give me."

"I know well the trouble is all of my own bringing, Mr. Repton," said she: "and there is nothing to gain in hiding the truth of it. You have no amends to make, and you can do naught for me beyond what you have already done—and are still doing, too: for it is to you I am owing my present comfortable home with Mrs. Buxton, who is more than kind."

"That is nothing," said I; "I could scarce do less,

seeing it is my very life I am owing to you. But do not let us speak of debts, Joan. I cannot abide to see your patient grief without offering you help: poor help it is at the best. In fact, I am well aware it is not worth the having. I am not suitable, I know: and my upbringing is clean against me. Your former wont to make little of me, too, that was no less than my merits, holds me back from saying one-half I would. I am very full of grave defects, but I would indeed strive ——"

"There is no need to confess your faults to me who am full to the brim of far worse," she cried breaking in. "Any way, not just now, when I am so much beholden to you, and after my ungrateful speech about your conscience."

"But you will not understand me," said I, in a flutter that I do believe was more distressful than going through with a fight, though it lasted less time. "I want to offer you the help of my own unworthy self, if you will have it: and my fortune, such as it is, and all that I have, Joan dear." And I seized the hand that was next me and brought it to my lips before, I think, she knew what I was at.

She withdrew her hand with some force, and there was no doubt but the colour mounted to her forehead as: "I cannot think it possible you would mean me a real discourtesy, Mr. Repton," said she; "but you must surely know that this is nonsense, if not far worse. Don't rob me of the esteem I had for you. I could not bear it just now with the other troubles."

"No, I feared my help was too poor," said I: "and you will do me the justice to remember I told you it

was not worth the having: neither is it, I know. But discourtesy would be a very strange behaviour betwixt you and me now: and I will swear I intended none to you, Joan. It may have been a folly and a stupid piece of presumption to offer you my love: unwarranted, too, remembering your former contempt of me. But at least it was kindly meant, and you need hardly have snatched your hand from me as though I were a leper."

She tarried in the midst of the field where we walked, and I thought in my ignorance that I could read her upturned face like a book. There was a great wonder in it; but surely I saw something else in her liquid eyes that was not all in my disfavour.

"But what is this—tell me?" she cried, with a deep gasp. And then, with a seeming effort, she changed her tone to one of command. "Will you tell me truthfully; but I know you will do that," said she, "when you first thought of offering me your love? Am I not right when I say 'twas within the sennight —or, at least, within the fortnight?"

"Since you ask me like that," said I, "it was, Joan; but what has that to do with it? It surely makes the offer no different?" And to this, like the blundering young ass I was, I added, "If you must needs be so very exact, I had not fully settled the matter in my mind till my talk, but now, with Cornish and Goldbetter, when I knew for sure I was a free man for the asking."

"And you thought, Mr. Repton, that the woman you were about to honour with your new-found love," said she, "would be content to accept it, like any

other alms, and be married for a great pity and compassion first, and perhaps some love afterwards?"

"I don't rightly remember what I thought, Joan," said I; "for I have had no great leisure for reflection since my mind was made. But I can tell you my heart is full sore just now: and I scarce thought I should meet with so much rebuke. How can I say precisely how much pity may have had to say in the matter? I have had practice in none of these things, though I have lately read somewhere that 'pity is sworn servant unto love.'"

She was silent for a while, and "Well then," said she, with a smile so sad that I could scarce withstand my own tears: "I will accept your pity, Mr. Repton, and your love you can reserve for someone who is higher and better than I."

"None else shall have it, since you won't, Joan," said I, quite mistaking her meaning: "and I can promise you that, too. And if I have offended you, be sure it was not by design, and grant me your pardon of my inexperience. I am quitting this place in a few days, and 'twould be a great pity if we should fall out before I go; for if I fail in my endeavour to find Oliver, we are unlike to meet again."

"Charles," said she; and at that word my heart beat again like a frightened child's, for I thought she was changing her mind: "Charles, I owe you too much, and we have shared too much trouble in company to be parting in any misunderstanding." I was wrong again; but I thought for a moment that her grey eyes belied her firm speech, as she laid one hand on my arm and offered me the other that she had lately withdrawn. She went on, "It is not a time for me

to accept, nor you to offer, your love: and this is to be the very end of it. I believe, indeed, you are a true man, and the girl would be a happy one and fortunate that had your mature love. But my hope is that none will get it. I admire you: I admire your learning: I admire your patience with us unlearned folk, and I admire your amazing cool courage in danger. I have not seen the man in Salop, no nor in England, that is one-half your match for truth and manliness and all those things a woman loves to look up to. I thank you for your generous offer, and I love you for your great love of Oliver; but your wife I can never be." And to my great astonishment she drew me towards her and kissed me.

We were come just then to a stile that gave on to a path through the shrubbery screening the parterre of Mrs. Buxton's garden, and before I had time to get over my surprise, Joan was across the stile and disappeared among the bushes.

I waited a few seconds, and then I remembered I had not yet seen Mrs. Buxton, who might perhaps think it odd I shouldn't be at the pains to thank her for her entertainment of Joan. I was scarce in the humour to pay her a visit now, but conceived it would be proper to send her a message. When I found my speech I called out to Joan and, though I hardly supposed my voice would carry so far, she was back at the stile in a trice.

"What is it?" said she, somewhat out of breath.

"Will you tell Mrs. Buxton I will do myself the pleasure of calling upon her to-morrow to thank her for her consideration of you?" said I.

She nodded her head in reply, and it may have

been my fancy, but I thought I observed a shade of disappointment in her face as she turned and was gone again.

When I reached Goldbetter's house I found him waiting for me in the hall with a look of much concern.

"Fr. Cornish has been very ill," said he. "The doctor was here, but now: and he says it was a slight stroke of the palsy, which is passed away for the time; but he must be kept very quiet for a month or more. You were no sooner gone than he had a failing speech and his mouth drawn to one side; so I sent for the physician at once. He is in bed now and would see you presently, though I think he were best left quiet for the night."

"But what are we to do for the poor man?" said I. "Can you keep him here for my sake, Goldbetter, till he is fit for travel again?"

"I doubt he will make but the one journey of it now, Mr. Charles," said Goldbetter. "But you may make your mind easy about him in the meanwhile; his home shall be here and he can stay as long as he will. This is not alone for your sake: it is because I love the man now for his own unselfishness."

CHAPTER X

LONDON

I REACHED London on June 3 or 4, 1709, and went into suitable lodgings in Bury Street.

I think I have already told you that at this time there was little, if any, persecution of the Catholics in England outside the cities of London and Westminster and their suburbs. And even in these places quiet law-abiding citizens, merchants, householders and the like of our persuasion, were not molested save on rare occasions of riot and disorder, when the temper of the mob and rabble was enflamed by designing persons who would have old penal laws and new proclamations put into force. But, dating from years back, when it was hardly safe for Catholics to travel at all, the custom of our people to choose certain lodgings in London, mostly kept by Catholics and known to all the fraternity, was continued to the present time.

This house in Bury Street was one of such, and it was commended to me by Fr. Cornish as the place where he himself lodged when in London, and whose landlady had his instructions to receive and keep his letters for him. The situation, too, was convenient to the "Garter," a coffee house in Jermyn Street well known to and frequented by Catholics, where I proposed to have my food.

Both my guardians had been in favour of my going

to London without delay, when it was found that Fr. Cornish was unable to travel: and as I could be of no service to him by tarrying at Goldbetter's house, and was myself wishful to get away from Oswestry, I followed their counsel; fortified with a letter to the landlady by virtue of which I had authority to open the father's letters. There were, however, none at the house on my arrival there.

This was my first acquaintance with London; for, though I lay a night in the town on my journey with Cornish from France, through Holland, to Bromley Chase, we arrived after nightfall and quitted the place at daylight the next day. I was therefore a complete stranger now, and the sentiment of loneliness with which the city inspired me was none the less by reason of my impatience to get news of Oliver Selby that would call me away from it.

I have never shunned solitude in the country. In truth, I conceive that I favour it: not from poetical fancies, but rather because I am familiar with the phases of the life around me, whether animal or vegetable: and they claim and absorb, like a well-writ book, my whole attention to the exclusion of self-contemplation. And no doubt the crowded footpaths, the loud and strange street cries, and the incessant rumbling of the coaches on the ill-paved thoroughfares in London may appeal to the domestic humours of those familiar with them. But on me, a stranger, their effect was to hold me as far aloof from the occasions of the community that needs and causes them, as though I had been in a wilderness a hundred leagues from human habitation.

But I must admit that the oddness of it all soon

wears off: and though the streets are more silent and are better paved and kept in Paris, and the buildings are on the whole finer, there are many respects in which London is superior to the French capital.

In my case, the rubbing off of the strangeness to my new surroundings was in great measure hastened by a circumstance that I look upon as one of the most fortunate hazards of my life; since it enabled me to renew an intimate friendship and led me indirectly to much happiness. For, on sitting down to dinner at the "Garter" the second day after my arrival in London, I came face to face with Cyril Oswald whom I had not met all these years. He was grown into a fine strong man, and was now in London on a visit of some months, receiving, from Sir Godfrey Kneller, lessons in painting for which he had developed a passionate talent.

It was a real contentment to me to fall in with Cyril again, and our old familiar intercourse was resumed as though we had never been parted. We contrived to take our meals in company and such walks abroad as he could spare the time for from his painting occupations. Under his guidance I rambled through, and learned my way about, the streets and squares of this intricate city: and together we visited many of the sights of London, such as the lions in the Tower, the tombs in Westminster Abbey and the like, beside divers shows, not all of which made for my edification. In fact, the spectacle of ugly deformity, far from kindling my curiosity, is apt to repel my compassion by inspiring the unworthy suggestion of personal uncleanness in its victims. And since I am also conscious that such an attitude towards these

poor souls does injustice to many of the afflicted, I feel I am the better away from sights the beholding of which is, at the best, but the gratification of an unwholesome lust. I had rather pay the entrance money twice over for the good of the monsters if I could be spared the exhibition of their imperfections.

It was likewise a consolation to confide to Cyril the history of my life since the days I spent at Carlton House, and to hear his account of himself and his family. And he was, of course, much concerned with me over the ravishment of Oliver Selby; though I held it to be right to say little about the time in the empty house, and nothing of my late talk with Joan, nor of the burying alive.

Mr. Secretary St. John was still in retirement at this time; but when I called upon him at his London residence, which was then in Leicester Square, I learned he was coming to town from his seat at Windsor in a few days. So that, unless he should have forgot me in the meantime, I hoped, in accordance with his own desire, to have the opportunity to renew an acquaintance that had attracted my fancy ever since my short interview with him in Paris.

I had been in London ten days when the looked-for letter came for Fr. Cornish from the provincial in Paris, the seal of which I broke in a well-nigh feverish desire to be at the contents. The letter was very long, and it took me much time to comprehend the full purport of those parts which concerned me so nearly and were to blast my hopes of a speedy reconciliation with Lucas Selby. I shall not weary you with the whole of it, since it contained other matter

and some repetition of the facts: and I merely enumerate those points that will interest you.

In effect, the writer had heard of the abduction; but he repudiated all connection whatsoever with the deplorable act which, in his opinion, could not have been authorised or instigated by a member of the company. Since, in that case, it had like to defeat its own ends and cause grave complaints on the part of the secular Catholic clergy to his Holiness against the Jesuits. Nothing was known in Paris of the movements of Oliver Selby and Tresham, save that the last-named was said to be gone into Flanders to await the arrival of the Chevalier, who was expected to quit St. Germain for the field of war in a few days. As soon as precise information concerning Tresham should come to hand he would be writ and exhorted to make instant restitution. As to the letter to me from the provincial that had been at the bottom of so much mischief, the explanation was scarce one with which he himself could have been well content. He said he had never been unmindful that Charles Repton was not to be called upon to make reports: albeit he had supposed that the concessions first made to Fr. Cornish were only held to be in operation while the said Repton was under the guidance of Francis Tresham: and not afterwards. Nevertheless the letter in question was not writ by the provincial. It had been conceived and drawn up by one of the fathers at the college in Paris, in the course of his ordinary duty, on learning the sad condition of Mrs. Selby. The father had brought the letter for signature to the provincial, who had signed it without sufficient perusal of the same. The

contents were unknown to any but the father who writ it.

The reading of this letter plunged me into a dejection which I knew to be unreasonable; since it is given to few in the world to have their desires fulfilled in the very way and at the moment they would choose. But so long as there was no sure information that serious obstacles lay between me and the consummation of my longing, I had been content to hope with some faith: and now in my disappointment I knew not where to turn for counsel. There was no use in going back to Oswestry; neither of my guardians knew more than I did, or could do more for me than commend me to a wise patience until such time as it might please the provincial to write again. Moreover, Fr. Cornish, to whom I sent the letter next day, must not be troubled more than was needful in the time of his sickness.

When I went to my dinner that day at the "Garter," I must have carried some of my distress in my face, since Cyril Oswald marked my gloom and asked the cause of it. I told him of the letter and the upset of my plans that it brought me. And he was so much taken up in comforting and consoling me that he clean forgot, till the end of dinner, to discover a matter which it had been on his mind to speak of at the beginning.

"By the way, Charles," said he; "I came near to quitting the room without telling you of what was uppermost in my thoughts when I entered it. Did you ever know an English Catholic in Paris by name of Despard?"

"Why, yes," said I: and there came back to me

again, in a moment, all the happenings of that afternoon in Tresham's club: "I have met such an one, though I can't say I was well acquainted with him."

"Well, he lodges in the same house with me," said Cyril: "and has been there a fortnight and more; albeit I knew naught of him till three days ago when the landlady asked me to see him, as he is of our faith."

"Then I must warn you," said I, "that I know no good of him; in fact only evil, if he is the same man."

"I'm thinking the poor fellow will not long have the power to work good or ill," said he. "It seems he was run down by a coach the day after he came to the town and suffered so bad a fracture of the thigh that it was found needful to cut his leg off: and now gangrene is set in. I have sat with him a space every day since the landlady asked me. Last night I chanced to mention that I had taken a walk with you in the forenoon, when he asked, in some amazement, if you were the Charles Repton of the Company of Jesus. I told him you were, and, 'That cannot be,' says he, 'for he is not long since dead.' After I had persuaded him that you were still in the flesh, he said no more at the time. This morning he sent me word that he wished to speak with me, and when I went to him, he implored me to beg of you to call upon him, as he has matter of much moment to communicate."

"What can he want of me?" said I. "He must have heard of my death in Paris, I suppose, after I was stabbed there. But ——"

"I have no notion," says Cyril, "what he wants; but the man seems near to death and has evidently

something on his mind. He has scen a priest twice; but if you can bear the stench of his chamber 'twould be a kind act to humour him. The surgeon gives no hope of his recovery."

"I can bear with the sick chamber," said I, "sith I was used to that work during my novitiate; but I can see no good in visiting him. So far as I can remember, I met him but the once: and that was at the time of the fight in the club which I told you of."

"Perhaps 'tis on the account of his share in that affair," says he; "but he has a great yearning to see you and he told me he would keep you but a little while."

"Then I will go with you," said I; "though I can make nothing of it."

We took a hackney coach to Russell Street, Covent Garden, where was Cyril's lodging, and were shown up to a room on the second storey, well furnished, with marble foot paces to the chimney. Here we waited while the landlady entered an inner room: whence she presently returned and said the gentleman would see me alone. Cyril whispered, "He can do you no harm," as I was going towards the door; but I had no fear of him.

The man lay in a comfortable bed with fine linen sheets, and it was plain to see that he was well cared for; but his face was so pale and transparent that, until he spoke, I thought he was a corpse. I went near to his bedside and, without raising his eyes towards me, he said in a low broken voice not unpleasant to hear: "'Tis Mr. Charles Repton?"

"Yes: I am come," said I, "according to your wish."

He was silent for a space, and then: "Man cannot fathom the Divine Will," says he. "I saw your body well-nigh laid to rest in the earth by the road-side not two months gone, and now you will live long after I am put away. God has at least saved me from one crime. But we thought for certain you were dead."

You may hold that I am lacking in tenderness of heart; but these words raised within me a tempest of joy whose only bane was a fear lest the poor cripple should pass from life before he had ended his speech. For, of course, I now knew that Despard was Tresham's companion at Bromley Chase, whose name Joan had failed to catch, and that he had assisted to bury me at the four cross roads, before being disturbed by Gwyllam Parry. He had been on the footbridge binding Joan and Oliver; but I had not seen his face nor marked him in my excitement. Now I was unable to refrain from hurrying the dying man and, "If you are truly penitent of your sins," said I, "and hope for God's infinite mercy, you will surely tell me where Tresham has taken the boy."

But he was not to be pressed. He would take his own time: and I was soon conscious that it was unseemly, if not indecent, to urge him further.

"It must be God's design that you should be the undoing of that man," said he, still without looking at me. Indeed, I think he never turned his face to me during the whole talk. "He has somewhat the better of you, just now," he went on; "but that will shortly be balanced. At every turn you thwart him: and the tool he prepared for his own purposes pierces

the hand of him that uses it. That is what the father confessor said. Tresham could not conceive that, allowing for your lesser age, your will was stronger than his and had the power of God behind it. It is not lawful to do ill that good may come; I know that now; but he does not know it: and so he never foresaw that, in training an aspirant to holy orders in the sword-play, he was but forging a weapon to be used to his own hurt. But the man will follow no counsel but his own. We warned him you would fight like a lion for the boy; but he only laughed and said you could do nothing without a small sword, and would be too timid of him to use your hands. So he made me and Tracey keep in the back with the cart the first time. We told him, too, it was foolish to arm the gipsies with cutlasses they knew not how to use. But he would do the thing in his own way without interference from any: insomuch that we were led to think the kidnapping was in part private revenge. He escaped you twice that day. First, through your own forbearance; it was not fear, I think: and the second time by a hazard that won't come to him twice. He is a doomed man. I know it as well as if I saw him dead. The next time he meets you will be his death. You will kill him as surely as I lie here."

"I want to be done with the killing," said I. "I see no sense in it; if I can get Oliver Selby back without bloodshed, the man may go free for me."

"Aye: but it won't be so," says Despard: "and I will tell you why before I am done. Francis Tresham has used me like the tool he would have made of you and taught me that the way to eternal life lay through

cunning, violence, and blood. Why did I believe him? Because I had not your will to withstand his attractions. I knew of you, though you never saw me till the fight at the club. He beguiled me by his fascinating personality, and in the language of the Old Testament, until there was scarce a crime I would not commit at his bidding."

He paused a while and then went on. "But here is the end of it. I bear him no malice, for he believes himself to be sent into the world to wield the sword of Jehu: to slay and spare not those that are against the Jesuits. No: I bear him no ill will, but I can see the right of it now, and I must thwart him as the priest says. He carried the lad to the Mawddach estuary where he had a *chasse-marée* in waiting that flew the English colours, and they were bound for Dunkirk. I left him at Dolgelley and went to see my kinsfolk in Lancashire."

The man stopped again: and my excitement became so extreme that I rejoiced to think he did not see my face. I durst scarce move or breathe lest I should lose a single word that came from him: and in a few moments he resumed his speech. "The lad is to go to Douay," said he, "to live with a priest in the Maison Blaise, Rue Dorignie, and he is to attend the classes at the English College."

I could constrain myself no longer and: "May God forgive you, since you have done all that man may do to make amends," said I.

"Let me finish," said he. "'Tis not so simple as it seems. You will never get the lad till you have killed Tresham: and you will kill him if you can learn to watch and wait. The boy will be guarded

night and day by that man's agents: and though Tresham is joining King James about Valenciennes, he will be to and fro and never more than five or six leagues from Douay. You will not be able to take the boy by force, for you could not move with the body of men needful for his capture in a country that is one huge camp, like the field of war now, for many miles round Douay. You must needs use the cunning of Tresham himself. You must throw yourself in with the Jacobites, here in England, and get yourself sent as a messenger to King James. They need many such: and Tresham cannot then avoid you. That is your one chance of meeting the man on even terms and fighting him alone ——"

He ceased speaking and, after a few moments, I perceived he was either in a faint or so much exhausted by his talk that he could not proceed. I at once called the landlady who administered a volatile spirit that brought him back to consciousness, though he now seemed so weak that further questions from me would have been improper if not impossible. We waited until the surgeon came, when Cyril and I took our leave: promising to call on the morrow. Before I quitted the poor man's chamber, I leaned over him and whispered that I freely forgave him all.

The next day at breakfast I learned from Cyril Oswald that Despard was dead and gone beyond the puny jurisdiction of mankind. His kinsfolk in Lancashire were writ by the landlady, but, of course, they could not reach London in time for his funeral which was attended by the surgeon, Cyril, myself, and two or three Catholics who had heard of his accident.

The information I had got from the poor man at the moment, as the phrase is, when my spirit had been cast down by the letter of the provincial, was of such a nature as I had no cause to hope for until it reached me; and, in consequence, I was filled with a contentment to which I had now been long a stranger. In fact I have since conceived the hazard that brought me to Despard's death-bed to have been no less than a miracle. But at the same time I could see clearly that my troubles were not yet over, if they had more than begun, and that the dead man's counsel touching the manner of my pursuit of Tresham was not easy to follow.

To throw in my lot with the Chevalier now, and in this way set about the undoing of that man's schemes, was not to my fancy: and, apart from the taking up of precious time, would lead, I feared, to intrigues and dissimulation of which I had had more than enough. But had I clearly perceived that, in doing so, I should accomplish what was now become my chief aim in life (namely to restore Oliver to his friends), there is little doubt in my mind but I should have risked the loss of my land and turned into an ardent Jacobite there and then: as you shall see that I came near to doing later.

It is well that this should be known and understood. Since it is no unusual thing for persons at the present time to take pride that their parents adopted the politics, aye, and even the faith which they now find them holding, without entering into the account the chances and accidents that may have swayed them in the days that are gone. As Colonel Porch had said to me on the day when I first met him, there is much fate in these matters.

But other occasions were to prevail with me: and my adherence to the Hanoverian succession, that Goldbetter set so much store by, came to me in the end rather as a habit that suited than as a sentiment. And it is to be supposed that many others were in like situation.

I called again upon Mr. St. John a few days after the funeral and found he was come to London: in fact, he was quitting his house on some affairs connected with his politics as I walked up the steps to his door. He greeted me with so much affection as justified, I thought, my presumption in seeking to renew the acquaintance: and certainly it flattered my self-importance.

"Ha, ha: this is indeed a pleasure," says he, when we were come face to face. "My dear young priest militant: you have been often in my thoughts, and I take it most complimentary that you come to see Henry St. John, who is still your obliged servant, though plaguey busy for the moment. I cannot invite you inside just now."

He put his arm round me and guided me to a coach and four that waited upon him at the foot of the steps and bid me enter it before him.

"Come with me a part of the way. I have an appointment I must keep at Kensington Palace," said he: "and I can set you down where you will on the road thither. In the meanwhile we can talk and arrange another meeting. My wife is not yet come to London."

"I have made so bold, sir," said I, so soon as the coach was started, "as to profit myself of your kind letter writ me in Paris after ——"

"You could have done naught to pleasure me more," says he: "and you must come and lodge with us when Mrs. St. John comes up. Though I am still in retreat, as I daresay you know, I can yet command votes, and we can present you to those in town who are the best worth knowing."

"I called upon you, sir, the first time," said I, "with no other aim than to see you again and not to obtain any benefits of you. But since then my affairs are so much changed that I am in need of some good counsel, and I should be much beholden to you if you could aid me with yours."

"And that I will," says he, "to the best of my power. But I must first learn your needs; and, as it is ill gossiping in a noisy coach, perhaps you would dine with me to-morrow afternoon. We will have a *tête-à-tête* at Pontack's, and you can then tell me what I may be able to do for you."

I thanked him for his invitation, which I gratefully accepted, and he presently put me out at the top of St. James's Street.

Pontack's eating-house in Abchurch Lane was said to be at that time the best ordinary in London, where many persons of quality went to dine, as did divers merchants of the city, and those who inclined to choice dishes of meat served somewhat after the French manner. Mr. St. John had a table reserved for two, and we were able to discourse at our ease without fear of listeners.

I lost little time in putting him in possession of my story, to which he hearkened with increasing interest as I proceeded: interrupting me now and

then on matters that confused him in the narration: such as the precise period of time betwixt my receipt of the provincial's letter and the ravishment: likewise the time that had elapsed betwixt the ravishment and the fatal accident to Despard which he seemed to think providential. But his interruptions were fewer than might well have been expected: and that which amazed me more than a little was his general knowledge of the world's affairs which seemed infinite. I had no need to tell him of the English college at Douay nor that it was no longer under the control of the Jesuits, as in the past. He knew far more than I did of the place and spoke of the quarrels then going on betwixt the Jesuits and the principal of the college, whom the former, at this time, accused of the Jansen heresy.

"I cannot myself perceive," said he, at last, "where Tresham's gain lies in this business. In the common affairs of life, whether they be political or not, it is the custom to seek the motives that dispose men to act as they do: and when we can discover them we have a key to the cipher in which their actions are wrapped that, allowing for some error, makes them simple to read. But this man fairly puzzles me. It is not hard to account for his attack on Mr. Porch in Paris."

"You mean," said I, "that he wished to discover your incognito there?"

"No: I do not," says he. "I more than suspect that he knew who I was: and if not, the murder of Porch, unless they should have killed me too and got my papers, would not have helped Tresham much to that end."

"Then what do you suppose 'twas for," said I; "since it has often given me to wonder?"

"That is where a little political knowledge comes in," said he. "But if you are to comprehend the matter you must give me your close attention: since it was entirely a matter of time and dates, I take it. Tresham got to know in some manner (how I cannot say, since I have no knowledge of his intimacy with the Chevalier) that Porch's mission was a direct one to the prince, supported by an authority in disguise, and that he would neither deal with Queen Mary nor with the Jesuits; only with the prince in person or the Scottish Protestants around him. Therefore it did not take him long to perceive that apostasy was to be the bargain for the Crown of England: and this is where the dates come into the account. You are to bear in mind that the Chevalier's expedition against Scotland failed last April twelvemonths: and it was in part to prevent a repetition of these attempts that Porch's mission was set afoot in May of last year. In other words, if the Chevalier's succession to the throne of England, on the death of Queen Anne, were assured to him, invasion and bloodshed would become unneedful in future. But I have now got sure information that, in July last, had the battle of Oudenarde, at which the Chevalier was present, been a victory for Louis XIV., a new attempt was to be made towards Scotland by the prince, supported by far more French troops than could be spared in April. The Jesuits were aware of this new design; at least, I have it in writing that the Pope knew of it early in May: and if the Jesuits knew the plan, why of course Tresham was

likewise privy to it. You thus see that at the very moment of Porch's mission the Catholic Jacobites and Jesuits were hoping to win the Crown of England in the autumn by force of arms for the Chevalier, without any conditions of abjuration. Consequently, from their view, the mission must be delayed for a few months, if not crushed, at any cost. And Tresham undertook to crush it by a quarrel in his precious club that, but for you, young man, and your Irish friend, would have ended by Porch being slain, in fair fight of course! Once Porch was disposed of," he went on, "the mission must needs come to an end, for of course it was not possible for me to emerge from my incognito and let the world know what Harley out of office and the Queen were striving after. I should have had to fly the country to avoid detection. But these are secrets that are quite safe with you."

"You assume, sir, then," said I, "that the Jesuits were in the plot to remove Colonel Porch?"

"I assume nothing," said Mr. St. John. "I state but the bare facts and folk may draw their own conclusions. I hope for your own sake you have long since broke your connection with those Paris Jesuits. If not, you must be prepared to hear what the world and men of ordinary sense will say of those who employ, and are friends of, a cut-throat bully with a cloak of piety over his shoulders. But this kidnapping business confounds me."

"My lawyer has it," said I, "that if Oliver Selby turned Protestant he would forfeit his inheritance in France and the clergy would lose their tithe of

it, or so much more as they might expect from a good Catholic heir."

"Blows the wind from that quarter! So there's money at the bottom of it?" says he. "Yes: that will explain much, no doubt. It may not be the complete key to the cipher, inasmuch as the man seems just now to have his hands full of the Chevalier's affairs, but it certainly supplies a motive to his violent methods. And, since he has carried the lad to Douay, he may be striving to kill two birds with one stone there. There is another point, too; and if young Selby is to attend the classes at the English College at Douay, it may not be properly said that he is being educated by the Jesuits. There may be a deep reason for that: and I shouldn't wonder. But what measures hath this Lucas Selby taken to recover his son?"

"I learned that he moved about the country like one mad," said I, "until he apprehended that his lad was carried across the water: since when he has done naught: and can do naught, so far as may be seen."

"No," says he. "Were it not for this plaguey long war I could have got the boy returned to you, sure enough, through our ambassador in Paris. But now we have none there: and that is, maybe, the reason why the lad has been carried to France. I think, now, you should see to it that Mr. Selby gets no hearing of his son's hiding place, lest, by his impetuosity, he should upset your plans. How would it be if Porch could help us in this matter: you know he is with the army again in Flanders?"

"No," said I: "it was on my mind to ask you if I had like to see him in London."

"Some months ago he rejoined the Duke of Marlborough, whose latest advices show him to be at Lille," said Mr. St. John: "and I'm thinking 'tis not impossible that he may be of service to us now; though 'tis true Lille is full seven leagues from Douay. Still the matter is worth considering of. But why should you not seek Porch yourself and invite his aid?"

I told him what Despard had said on his death-bed of my joining the Jacobites as a means to the hazard of meeting Tresham and calling him to account, and I dwelled on my repugnance to follow the counsel.

He was silent for a while, in thought, before, "I don't favour that scheme," says he. "It smacks too strong of the swashbuckler for my taste, apart from your disinclination to the Chevalier's cause. No: the man Tresham must be fought with more subtlety than that. The plan, too, seems to assume that the kidnapping was carried out for a private end rather than to serve the Catholic cause. What gage have we that the boy will be easy to capture even if Tresham were dead? Why, he might be more closely guarded than ever. And who knows what high influence may not be concerned to keep him in captivity? No; believe me, that was not the counsel of a wise man, and you were in the right to regard it with disfavour."

"And yet, I would even go far against my inclination, if you held it would profit me in my search," said I.

"Would you so? Stay: I have it," says he. "You shall go straight to the duke himself. Why not? That is, if you have a mind for some rough work and possibly blows, and for life in a camp for a space. The duke is my very dear friend and would do much to oblige Henry St. John. But what do you think; will you consider of the notion? I design to give you a letter of introduction to him."

"I have no knowledge of war and the use of camps, nor ever thought to want it," said I.

"I think that need give you no concern," said St. John. "I imagine the omission in your training could be supplied, in some measure, by an order for your attachment to the battalion in the Tower, or to the squadron of horse at Kensington, for a schooling of two or three months that would ground you in the art. But it does not follow that the duke will be able to give you a military employment when you shall have reached him. I shall merely crave his powerful aid for you, in your need, and leave to him the manner of it. It may be that he can use you, and, in the using, help you in your search; and to that end you would be none the worse prepared through some instruction in drills and exercises at the barracks. But I can promise you nothing save my good-will and the duke's, for which I can answer."

"'Tis something sudden for my brain to grasp, sir," said I: "and, if you will not hold me lacking in gratitude for your pains, I had rather consider of it, as you say, than give an answer out of hand."

"Why there perhaps you are wise again," says he. "I thrust my counsel down no man's throat; nor am

I wont to offer letters of introduction to the Duke of Marlborough to all and sundry who have a mind for them. But your wants just now are singular, if I may say so, and it seems you must have singular good fortune if you are to satisfy them. I cannot indeed ensure the good fortune since I am no astrologer; but if it is to be a choice betwixt Marlborough and Prince James, there needs none to say which is the more like to help you to the recovery of a boy kidnapped by the Catholics. My offer is the best I know of, and is another tribute to your face; for I would no more saddle the duke with an encumbrance that might chance to hurt him than I would cut off my right hand for a jest. And you should bear in mind that, though I am your two-fold debtor in the Paris mission, I have the honour of but a short acquaintance of you."

I think I have told you before that there was something out of the ordinary taking in the manner of Mr. St. John—a caressing tyranny may I now say?—and if you shall add to his manner the rare gift he possessed of not merely appealing to the intelligence of his hearers, but also of quickening, by a subtle flattery, their moral impulses, you shall picture the man as he sat before me that afternoon. Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, I who owe you a debt that cannot be counted in coin of the realm, have never cast a stone at your reputation nor ceased to lament its loss. But if you had put the like trust in God that you did in your own dazzling genius of discerning the good which lies in mankind, I may say with confidence you would still be the greatest man in England. If your belief in the Creator had been as

profound as your knowledge of men, you would not now be wanting power and place.

A mirror hung on the wall behind my host and, as he spoke, it chanced to catch my eye and revealed to me the face of a young man somewhat flushed with excitement, wine and eating, but with enough of wit in it to know that he was in uncommon good case to be sitting at table in friendly talk with so great a man. A sense of my own littleness and of the condescension of this distinguished statesman, who called himself my friend, overpowered me and gave me to regret that I had hesitated to trust myself to his guidance, even as he had trusted me from the first moment he saw me. The shortness of life at its longest became manifest to me in a clearness unusual to youth, and the value of it, if lost in an engrossing cause, dwindled to insignificance. There were other and better men than I who willingly laid it down at the call of their country in quarrels of which they understood no jot: so why should I hold back that had so much to gain? And, "If you will allow me to recall my speech of a minute ago, sir, I will gratefully accept your kind offer," said I: "and, if you please, we will then cry quits as to your being my debtor, whether the plan shall succeed or not."

CHAPTER XI

MALBROUCK S'EN VA-T-EN GUERRE

THERE are many books on the conduct of war, though I had scarce read any: and of these had little understanding, since it most ways seemed to me the writers take it for granted that the reader has a general knowledge of military movements which I, for one, lacked.

A few years since I came across a volume of the *Spectator* in which is a speculation by Mr. Addison, protesting against the introduction of French phrases into English letters and other accounts of the battles and sieges of the late long war. And, as an example of what he abhors, he gives the copy of a letter writ by a young gentleman in the army to his father. But my complaint against the few books I had read was, not so much that foreign names are used to express warlike evolutions, materials, weapons and other conveniences as, that the authors refer to the military problems which confront the general in a somewhat mystic brevity. So that the student is left to conjecture there is but one solution of them, and that he who should hazard others must needs be a fool. At least those were the only lessons I learned.

I think Mr. Addison is in some measure unreasonable in objecting to foreign words, since we have none of our own to give the meaning of such simple

matters as a regiment, battalion, squadron, bayonet, and the like, that are all borrowed from our neighbours. It would, in my opinion, have been more to the point if he had used his satire to condemn the ambiguity of those who purport to set about making clear the difficulties of a compaign in language that, albeit English, conveys no knowledge to the English reader. He should, I think, have smit with his irony those who say that one general was in the right to make such and such a flank march, while another committed a grave error in laying siege to such and such a city without having first defeated his enemy in the open field. Wherefore do they omit to tell us why, in other circumstances, such flank marches have had calamitous issues, and success has often crowned the combination of a siege undertaken before the enemy was overthrown in battle?

You who have had the uncommon patience to follow my story so far I promise that, while I cannot pretend to cut out all French words from this history, I shall only describe such military events as I myself now understand the nature of. And, since I have experienced the exasperation caused by the obscure language of some writers on war, I shall strive to reward your courtesy in bearing with me so long by sparing you this ill convenience, as far as I can.

When I accepted Mr. St. John's offer of a letter of introduction to the Duke of Marlborough, I had no clear notion of how my quest of Oliver Selby was to be furthered by it, save that I should be somewhere in his neighbourhood by following the army in Flanders. And I could not but chafe at the delay he proposed of a three months' tarrying in London

to learn the rudiments of a soldier's profession that might never be of service to the cause I had at heart.

You will no doubt observe that the question of patriotism never entered my mind at this time: and I shall have something to say on that matter later, when I got to learn the sacrifices we ask our soldiers to make for us and the scanty remuneration we make them in return for the performance of their harassing duties. But at the moment, blame me if you will, patriotism was about the last of the sentiments that induced me to take up Mr. St. John's offer. What really moved me was an intense yearning to be up and doing something for the boy's release and, as I have said, a sort of strange prophetic insight of the shortness of life and the meanness of it when entirely spent in trying to preserve it. And I must add to these the singular personality of the man himself who made the offer.

Accordingly I tried to practise patience in following, to the letter, the counsels of Mr. St. John: and I was most diligent at the drills and exercises of the squadron to which he got me attached at Kensington. The officers were kind to me on the whole, although I could perceive they found it hard to comprehend my zeal to learn the smaller details of the trade they seemed rather to tolerate than to love. It is, however, but fair to say that, though they were indifferent to the daily routine of their business, they were one and all eager for service under Marlborough; and, at least, we had in common the burning desire to get away from a life of inaction.

When they came to learn something of my former life they fastened to me the nickname of "the

priest" which, however, did not appear to me to be used in any reproach: nor was there, from the first, any lack of courtesy in their somewhat exclusive society. They drank immoderately at night, though I was never pressed to take more than my wont save on one occasion, near the end of the time that I dwelled among them, when they were for proving, as they said, the strength of "the priest's" head. In sum, I formed the opinion, which I have never since had reason to alter of all the officers of the army; that, though they are a distinct body in the life of the nation, with customs so distinct as to seem foreign, their virtues and their vices are those of the whole race. And that, when the stiffness of first introduction is relaxed, they are a warm-hearted generous lot of men, whose love of justice and fair play goes far towards redeeming their obvious faults. I speak, be it understood, of the whole body, for I know there are many unworthy members that bring discredit on the class. But I rejoice to take an occasion to set this down, since I have lately observed a habit to make little of them in some writers that have, maybe, never seen an officer but in a coffee-house or tavern.

Of life in London during my military schooling I saw, perhaps, as much as I wanted: and my duties at Kensington began so early of a morning that it is little wonder I had no inclination to night amusements. But when Mrs. St. John joined her husband in town, which she did while I was at the barracks, he presented me to her: and she, in turn, introduced me to several great ladies. On occasion, she must needs insist on carrying me to evening parties where

were music, dancing and card-playing, and of which she sometimes attended more than one in a night. She was one of the sweetest women I have met: beautiful to look upon and good withal, I think, since she would have none of the gossip and scandal so common amongst persons of quality and fashion. It was always a regret to me that her husband gave her little, or none, of his company of nights. She was so good as to say it contented her to take a young man new from the country among the beaux and sparks of fashion; so I bore her company gladly, if only to pleasure her. But I got little satisfaction and no profit of it, I think. I was conscious that I cut a sorry figure as I slid about on the polished floors of the drawing-rooms; while the shamelessly naked bosoms of many of the ladies, their sometimes impudent familiarity and their coquette grimaces, repelled far more than they attracted me. Over all, too, hung the close air of these crowded chambers, charged with the fumes of innumerable candles and the stale smell of the perfumes, cosmetics and powders that the most of these women and some of the men use in profusion. I laid no claim to be a judge of female behaviour and accomplishments: far from it. I knew, as I think I have already given you to understand, naught of the methods men employ to win their favours and respect their humours. But how any man that professes a love of nature can prefer these artificial, high-scented actresses (for that is what they are) to their clean, wholesome sisters of the country, who have no need of paint to hide the fresh complexions God has given them, has often made me to wonder.

It is quite possible that with more use I might have learned to take some pleasure in these diversions: and surely none could desire to share them with a more agreeable companion than Mrs. St. John who, if she observed it, affected to be blind to my awkwardness in fashionable assemblies. I was grateful likewise to her for her hospitality to me in her own house, where I was free to come and go whensoever I would. But my turn came, before custom had made me familiar with it, to quit this manner of life. And I got a letter one morning from Mr. St. John telling me that if I had a mind to set off at once, I should be placed under the orders of a Major Beckett, who was being sent to Rotterdam in charge of a draft of 70 horses and 100 men for the army in Flanders. The time given me was too short to admit of a journey to Oswestry and back; so I had need to make my farewells to Fr. Cornish and Goldbetter by letter. The lawyer had writ me frequently while I was in London and kept me informed of the health of the father who, if not much better, was none the worse of his rest.

I embarked in the brig *Kate Overend* at Harwich, and Cyril Oswald came to set me off, though he was unable to spare the time to wait there till the day of sailing, which was not till the men and horses had been near eight days aboard: a delay that was harmful to the beasts, and brought about for no reason that could be guessed by any on the spot and least of all, perhaps, by him that caused it in London. After the third day of tarrying in harbour Major Beckett was for having the horses landed again; but this the captain of the brig refused

point blank to have a hand in. And therein I thought the man was right. For the manner of shipping the poor beasts from a barge and slinging them into the hold from the yard arm, with nothing but a hammock round their bellies, is a slow and hazardous operation: and they would be no sooner landed than orders might come to make sail.

We had a contrary wind most of the way; but the brig, being a new one and sailing pretty close to the wind, was the means of our making a speedy passage and also the cause of further delay at Rotterdam. Since, on reaching that port, a Dutch officer came aboard and told Major Beckett his orders were to have the vessel sailed and warped round to Gertrudenburg, before landing the men and horses. Whereat the captain of the brig asked him, saucily enough I thought, if he could conjecture how much water his craft drew. So that we were now reminded that the ship's handiness before the wind was due to her great draught, which was increased by a deep keel. And in the end none could be found, for a day or two, who would bear the responsibility of sending her through the water-ways of this barge-travelling country.

While they were in the beginning of the dispute an English officer arrived, and Major Beckett was so kind as to ask him if it was needful for me to wait on the ship, since he had only orders to set me as far as Rotterdam. This gentleman demanded with some severity to see my papers, and a few whispered words passed betwixt the two before I was asked by Beckett to show the only documents I had with me. These were my passport and what Mr. St. John called an open letter writ by the Secretary-at-War, who was

then Sir Robert Walpole. St. John had given me both together, telling me they would be all I should want and that the letter to the Duke of Marlborough was already gone. The open letter gave instructions to all officers whom it might concern to aid and further me on the way to join the headquarters of the duke. And its perusal would seem to have been so far satisfying to the new-come officer that he now treated both Beckett and me with a politeness, not to say obsequiousness, that put me in mind of Tresham. He gave orders for my servant and two horses to be landed at once: and I quitted Rotterdam the same forenoon for a ride of over a hundred miles that took me two-and-a-half days to accomplish, since I feared to tire the horses, straight from a ten days' imprisonment in the brig.

I reached the camp of the Duke of Marlborough, on the eastern side of the fortress of Mons, after nightfall on the 6th September, 1709, and had my introduction to an army in the field under conditions that are surely as mysterious and impressive as any of the sounds and sights of troops by daylight. The throbbing life of the great body is gone to rest, it is true. But what a wonder of invisible strength is spread in countless folds around the visitor who learns that this is war asleep! All its starch, pomp and circumstance, its pipe-clay and polished brass, its scarlet and trumpets, its weapons, drums, clatter and dust are put aside and only the huge, animal strength of the monster lies breathing there, with nothing between it and a vigilant enemy save a thin, unseen girdle of sentries whose distant challenges can now and then be heard. No other sounds but

the drumming twang of a tent rope tightening in the dew, or the low murmur of belated conversation. No sights beyond the stars and the subdued glow, through the tent walls, of the few authorised lanthorns that light those whose duty keeps them at work on the orders for the morrow. The power of the mighty creature has been counted and reckoned again and again; but it is mere conjecture; it is all unknown till it grapples a stubborn foe in the shock of to-morrow's battle. Therefore it seemed fitting and proper to be presented to its majesty in the dark.

The sentries round a camp are furnished by small bodies of men called picquets or detached posts, and these, when there are roads near, are posted on the roads; so that there shall be no delay in passing proper visitors into camp or in the detention by force of suspicious persons that may use the roads to guide them in the dark. I came by the main road from Hal, and was taken by a corporal of the picquet on that road to the orderly officer of the headquarters camp. This gentleman, whose tent we seemed to be an age in finding, was so fast asleep that my guide could not awaken him without a force which he was timorous to use. So he left me, in order to show my man where to put the horses. There were other two men in the tent of whom one awoke and told me I should find some blankets by groping in the far side of the tent; the which I did, and was soon lost to my surroundings.

I must have slept very sound, for when I awoke the tent was full of a warm, diffused light but void of men, and without was going on a most confounding, though not displeasing, babel of noises such as I had

never heard the like of. But the most curious thing about it, to me, was that the sounds came nearer or died away in the distance without ever the fall of a step being heard, save where a blunderer caught his foot in a tent rope. There were the shrill and measured tones of fife and drum in the distance, and the clashing of metal dishes nearer at hand mixed up with short and sharp words of command. There were the morning salutations of soldiers passing close by, the occasional bray of a trumpet, or the softer note of a bugle in the air and always, far and near, the dull thump, at intervals, of the mallet striking the tent pegs.

I jumped up to have a look at this strange, new world of travelling sounds without footfalls and, as I got to the door, came near to upsetting an officer who was about to enter the tent.

"Now we will go into your affairs. What do you belong to?" says he, glancing at my coat that lay on the ground and gave him no indication of what he sought to know; since, acting under the orders of St. John, I had travelled in a plain red habit without lace or ornament.

"I have no regiment, if that is what you mean," said I.

"Then what can I do for you?" said he.

"I am come to see the Duke of Marlborough," said I: "and, if I am not misinformed, he has a letter about me from Mr. Secretary St. John; but I am not so ignorant, neither, of military matters as to suppose he can pay a particular heed to my concerns until he shall have had leisure to consider of my case and——"

"Well, he has no leisure for you this morning: I can answer for that," says the officer. "But have you no papers?"

I showed him the open letter and said I had naught else but the passport, whereupon, "Come, you cannot starve while you tarry for Corporal John's leisure, at which he may not be for long enough," said he; "so you had as well join the headquarters' mess for the moment, at least. The plan will be for someone to let the duke know you are here and leave it to him to ask for you when it shall be convenient to him. But he is not here just now, and he slept out of camp last night. Let me see," he went on, looking again at the letter: "the name is Repton, is't not?"

"That is my name," said I.

"Why, yes: to be sure: you'll be he whom Colonel Porch was enquiring for at our last camp," said he. "He rid over with Prince Eugéne, who came to confer with my lord duke: and he asked me if any had heard of a man of your name coming to headquarters. He will be an intimate friend, I conjecture; for he seemed disappointed when we told him there was no news of you here."

"I may not say he is an intimate friend," said I; "for I think we have met but twice: for all I seem to know him very well, by reason of a secret we shared, about a year ago, that some others showed too great an eagerness to discover."

"He spoke very high of you, however; and I thought you had been an old friend, too, since he asked that word might be sent him when you should arrive," said the officer. "But occasion to see

Colonel Porch won't be long in coming, for the prince visits the duke or the duke calls on the prince near every day."

"And what does Colonel Porch with the Prince Eugéne?" said I.

"Oh! as for that," says he: "he has taken the place of Colonel Lumsden, who was killed by a grape-shot at the siege of Lille." And perceiving that I was in ignorance of who Colonel Lumsden was, he added: "there are English officers attached to the headquarters staff of each of the foreign commanders in the allied army; just as we have foreign officers attached to us and riding with the Duke of Marlborough. On the death of Lumsden, the Prince of Savoy solicited the services of Colonel Porch in his place. But this is the mess-tent, where you will get something to break your fast withal in a few minutes."

As we were entering the tent, which appeared to be empty, a horse soldier handed the officer, who was, I found, the camp quartermaster, a piece of paper, on which was some writing. He glanced at it, and, turning to me again, "The army is to march at once," said he; "but there will be plenty of time for you to have some breakfast before this tent is struck. I must leave you now to the care of a serving man. When you have eaten, ask for Major Maitland, and I will strive to do what I can for you."

He disappeared among the tents just as a domestic servant seemed to me to spring out of the ground at his shout, and came towards me to do my bidding. The man brought me a dish of cold bacon and some hot, boiled eggs, of which I ate heartily, to the sound

of well-nigh incessant trumpet calls and drums. While the din of the mallets loosening tent-pegs all round swelled to something like an uproar, and would have told me the camp was being struck had I not already learned the same from Major Maitland.

I found that officer again without much difficulty and, perceiving him to be very much engaged, I tarried till there was a pause in his occupations, when I asked him if I could do anything to help in what would have seemed a turmoil of commotion but that every man, despite the noise and bustle, knew his place and what was wanted of him. And they all contrived to avoid the hindrance of their fellows in a manner that was marvellous.

"Why, to be sure," says he: "you can, if you will, overlook the stowing of the headquarters light baggage on yonder wagons, and see to it that they don't overload them; for nothing vexes Corporal John more than to see a cart stuck in the mud, none the less if it contains officers' baggage, of which he often says we have overmuch."

There are few things, I think, that sooner give a man familiarity with new and strange surroundings than to make him take at once an active part in what is going forward: to turn him from a spectator into a helper. And now I had been but a bare half-hour at my new job before I forgot my old life entirely, and knew myself only as one of this extraordinary ant-hill of toilers: and a responsible one to boot. The work I was overlooking was humble enough, be it said, and was one that was left by custom to the officers' servants, who care nothing for the over-weighting of the wagons, provided that they can

stow away their masters' mails. They suppose that, by piling up more than the beasts can draw, they conceal the excessive quantity that each one is trying to get conveyed. And yet very little thought is needed to perceive that the proper loading of baggage wagons may play an important part of a day's operations at any time, and especially in wet weather and heavy soil. At least, I was content with my small beginning: and what pleased me not a little was the good humour of the men and the cheerfulness with which they accepted my judgment that a wagon was fully laden and should have no more put into it.

When the work was near completion, and the horses, mules and oxen were being already yoked to the wagons, a mounted trumpeter trotted up to the site of our fast vanishing encampment and sounded a call, with which I was then unfamiliar. Every man upon the instant desisted from what he was doing and stood up stiff to attention, with his arms close to his sides; and before I had time to note the sudden silence there appeared two horsemen, followed by a large staff.

"Carry on, carry on," said one of them, with a sweep of his arm all round; whereupon every man resumed the work he was doing a few moments back, before the interruption of the trumpet, just as though it were nothing to him that he stood (as I did) in the presence of the great Duke of Marlborough.

Yes: there could be no mistake about that. But it took me not a little time to determine, for sure, that his neighbour was the no whit less man of whom all Europe spoke at this time with something akin to awe. To the eye, at first glance, they were very

different; albeit alike in their zeal for the common cause. The older one sat his horse as if man and beast were the same animal, for all his fifty-nine years: and at a short distance he looked to be younger than his companion, who was but forty-seven.

In outward appearance there was, indeed, no comparison possible; at least, if you should insist on the making of one, it would be merely to lay an undue and insolent stress on the advantage of a graceful bearing, handsome form and face, over homeliness of feature and carriage.

What I am now about to write down did not come into my mind, be it understood, at the time when I first saw this immortal pair. But since I afterwards became acquainted with both, and was admitted to some small degree of intimacy with one of them, it is perhaps fitting that I should make known to you in this place the result of my later observations. The truth is that neither man can be contemplated alone, when we survey the military deeds by which they will always be known to fame, and in which their respective shares are inseparably interwoven. For the execution of the peculiar work they were called upon to perform together, the one could not do without the other. Each was the supplement to the other; what one lacked the other supplied, whereby we get that complement or perfection in the science and direction of war to which this invincible alliance of genius attained.

The one, calm, cold and calculating when weighing the hazards of a lightning stroke, had yet a tell-tale face that sometimes betrayed his anxiety,

amid the shifting fortunes of a battle, lest some tactical blunder might fail to confirm the wisdom of the strategy that brought it about. The other, no less calm in the council chamber or tent, was like an excitable schoolboy, and just as delighted withal, in the throng of a doubtful struggle. But nature had made him the suitable gift of a face so unruffled in danger and riot, that he looked to be always smiling, by reason of a long, up-turned nose and short upper lip, which disclosed teeth he could never quite conceal. When we remember that each man knew the other was supremely needful to him, and to the cause of the overthrow of the French King's power, we may perhaps perceive how they learned by instinct or by chivalry, or by both, to preserve the secret of each other's share in their amazing success in arms from the bosoms of their other intimates and, as I think, from all posterity.

Few things gave me more annoyance, for many years after the war, than the inquisitive demands of passing acquaintances who might chance to hear that I had been thrown for some time in the company of these men. They would always be for knowing which of the two I held to be the greater man. The answers I gave in all such cases were precisely alike. Neither is greater than the other; and it is my firm belief that neither would have earned the name and fame he did without the other.

The pair were now on their way, as I afterwards learned, from Ciply, where they had been reconnoitring the French army, and whither we were now to march; you shall hear in due season why. They rid through the English camp, as much to show

themselves to the troops as to observe the preparations for the march: and it was their custom to be seen together in all the different encampments of the allied army as often as was convenient. They were moving on from the place where I stood among the wagons when the Prince of Savoy said to my lord duke in the French: "I wish I could get the baggage of my staff packed with as much care on the wagons as this is."

The duke looked first at the wagons, with a smile, and then at me while, in a voice that was harsher than his handsome face would have led a stranger to expect: "Yes," says he: "they seem to be laden with some care, though not more than is needful in the mucky state of these roads. But who is this? I don't call to mind your name, sir. Are you detached for the day from —— ?"

Before I could reply Major Maitland was come up to the duke's stirrup and, with a salute: "This is Mr. Repton, sir, who bears an open letter from the Secretary at War," said he. "He has, I understand, been commended to the care of your grace. He arrived late last night, and, after I had got him some breakfast this morning, he desired to help me; so I put him on to the loading: and very well he has seen to it. 'Twas none of my own overseeing."

"Why look you now, your Highness," said the duke, turning to Prince Eugéne: "It seems we must needs be instructed in the proper execution of our duties by a young volunteer. I'll be bound, Maitland, that you have never had your wagons laden in such fashion before. But I give you the credit of the selection. I have a letter on your affairs, Mr.

Repton, from Mr. St. John; but I have laid it aside, and it grieves me that I cannot for the moment give them my attention, though I may be able to do so later. If you can put up with hard work and no pay, you are welcome to my camp and to ride with my staff; and if I may judge by your work this morning, you should prove a useful member of it to the wagon-master. I undertake no responsibilities, however, to your kinsfolk in England."

I saluted, and said, "I thank you, sir; I have no kinsfolk that count as such;" whereupon the whole cavalcade passed on; but not before Colonel Porch was fallen out for a moment from the rest of the prince's staff, and, shaking me by the hand, said: "No kinsfolk, perhaps, but some warm friends, I know."

CHAPTER XII

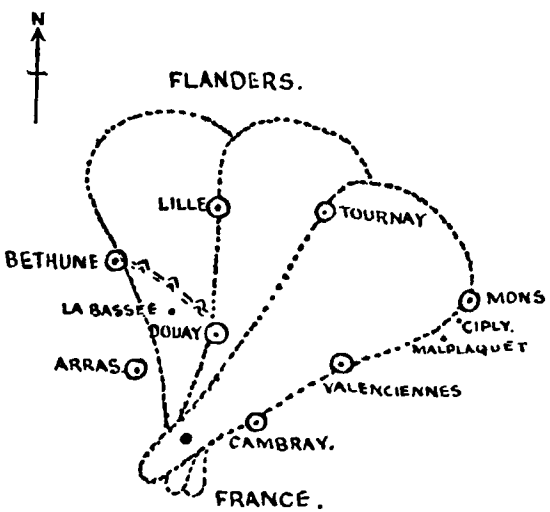
MALPLAQUET

I AM not ashamed to confess that I was in complete ignorance of what is called the strategy of the opposing armies at the time when I arrived at the camp of the Duke of Marlborough. And if you share my desire to get at the bottom of all the occasions in which I find myself any way concerned, perhaps you will allow me to try my hand at an explanation of what these two armies were now striving for.

To this end I purpose to give you information that came to me later from persons that were fitter than I to describe this matter. I shall likewise beg your indulgence to look at a small plan of the field of war; since the same has made clear to me the aim of this campaign and, being in the form of a fan, will not burden your memory. And I argue that what is plain to my intelligence will be equally plain to yours.

The spring of 1709 was a late one, and the forward movement of the allied army had been much delayed, as well on this account as on that of the hopes which were entertained that a peace might have been secured without a further campaign. But, since the negotiations came to naught, the two generals turned their attention to the hazards of an invasion of France, with design to march on Paris.

Now betwixt the allies and French soil proper, and across the shortest line by which they could march, there lay, spread like a half-closed fan with the handle towards Paris, a three-fold line of fortresses of which the most important were Lille, Tournay and Mons, next to the allies, in first line. In second line were Bethune, Douay and Valenciennes: and lastly, in third line, Arras and Cambray. (See my plan of the fan.)



But the allies had already captured Lille on the 9th December, 1708; and they began the campaign of 1709 from their encampment south of that city. So that it might be said they had broken through the first of this three-fold line. In order, however, that they should not evade the second line by marching

between Bethune and Douay, straight on Arras, Marshal Villars, who now commanded the French army, took up the famous position which is commonly known as the lines of La Bassée. These lines stretched, in a manner of rough speaking, all the way from Bethune to Douay: and behind them lay, in June, 1709, the whole French army to the number of over one hundred thousand men. The position was intrenched and otherwise fortified with obstacles till it was well-nigh impregnable: and my lord duke and Prince Eugêne, finding it too strong to assault, had to seek other means to draw this badger from his earth and make him fight in the open.

They set themselves to resolve this problem by offering to him the spectacle of the capture of one of his fortresses under his very nose, as the phrase is. They moved from their encampment about the middle of June, and demonstrated in front of the lines of La Bassée until Villars, in a panic, called to his aid near all the garrison of Tournay. But, secretly in the night of the 26th June, the whole of the allied army marched away to the north-east, and on the morning of the 27th they sat down before Tournay, with no opposition from the garrison so foolishly weakened by Monsieur Villars. Still the badger was not drawn from his earth.

When the city of Tournay fell, our two cunning generals marched down again to repeat their demonstrations in front of La Bassée, and again Villars supposed they designed to assault the lines. Again secret orders were given to the allied troops: and again they moved off to the north-east. This time their goal was Mons (the last of the fortresses in the

first of the three-fold line), and they reached that city on the 6th September. The eastern side of the fortress was invested that day: and that same evening, you will remember, I had arrived at the camp of the Duke of Marlborough.

But the badger was drawn at last: and Villars, finding too late how egregiously he had let himself be gulled, made haste to follow the two generals who could now lead him whither they chose and make him fight in the open. Yes, the badger was drawn at last, after more than two months sulking in his earth. But there was still time for the allies to beat him and get to Paris before the winter, if they had not been hindered.

Now there runs, or ran then, from a little to the north and west of Mons for five or six leagues in a southerly direction, a deep line of forest country that separates the plains to the immediate south of Mons from an army moving thither out of the west. Through this barrier of thick woods there were two openings. One towards the north that, for convenience, I shall leave unnamed, and one in the southern part that is properly called the Trouée d'Auluois; though it is pretty near identical with the village of Malplaquet which is just on the west side of the gap.

By dawn of the 7th September the French army encamped within a league of the forest, to the west of it and somewhat to the north of midway betwixt the two gaps I have told you of. It was to meet this move that orders were given (as you heard on the morning after my arrival) for the allies to march from Mons to Ciply which lies midway

betwixt the two forest gaps on the east side. We thus faced the French with the forest betwixt the two opposing armies.

But the French marshal now knew, as well as the generals who opposed him, that they had not placed this forest barrier between the two armies in order to avoid coming to close quarters with the French. He perceived, too late, that he had been manœuvred away, not alone from his intrenchments but, from his threefold line of fortresses, which now no longer screened France from her hungry enemies. And he saw that his last chance was come to stand between the allies and Paris. He remained inactive on the 8th September, but he was fully alert. And when, on that day, the allied army moved its main body from Ciply to the southern gap (where, I have said, was the village of Malplaquet), and sent a detachment to watch the northern gap, Villars waited for the cover of night to march the whole of his force down to close the lower opening from his side.

By noon on the 9th September he was in position across the gap, just when our generals advanced to crush him, and greeted his flanks with cannon shot; so close they approached. But it was not to be. The Dutch deputies who had borne the generals company through all the campaigns in this region, only to be a blight on every military enterprise of daring, interfered yet again to postpone and ruin the last pitched battle that Marlborough was ever to fight.

I believe it is not precisely known how the fight came to be stopped. The officers with whom I rid (and Porch was one of them) supposed the cannonade was the beginning of a great battle. But the infantry

was never actually engaged: and the "retire" was sounded everywhere by three of the clock. The French army then began to toil as sure never soldiers toiled before: and we could hear the incessant clicking of their picks and shovels along our front all night. On the morrow all thought the attack must surely begin. But, after the two generals had rid down the enemy's front, they were absent for near two hours on the 10th September: and then came orders to stand by for the day and await reinforcements. Soon after that the enemy's picks were at it once more, harder than ever, for another twenty-four hours: and the badger got to earth again.

The Dutch deputies have spread it abroad that, at the council held that morning, they had the sanction of the Prince Eugéne to this second postponement of the battle which the duke was impatient to begin. But this is a tale that, I think, none of the prince's soldiers will ever believe; seeing how notorious it was that he was even more bent than the duke on getting to Paris and wringing terms of peace from the old King who had wronged him in his youth.

Whatsoever may have been said at the council (and the truth perhaps we shall never quite know) it is certain that the army received the news of the further delay in a sullen temper that was manifest throughout the afternoon, at least in the English bivouacs. And, since the duke had a touch of the low fever that gave to his face a pallid look of lowering and fatigue as he rid about, the men set the same down to his partnership in their discontent.

I got scarce any sleep that night, seeing it was late before I lay down to rest, and I was awakened soon

after midnight by Major Maitland, who had engaged me to assist him and the wagon-master to park the light baggage in expectation of the battle next day. This work occupied us for about three hours: by which time the whole of the bivouacs were astir, and long before daylight the troops kneeled in public prayer. No Catholics were recognised in the English army which was recruited, both officers and men, from professing Protestants. But I had no shame of kneeling with the rest and praying for deliverance from the grave peril that hung over us all that morning. And I have no doubt many other Catholics were there whose prayers, like mine, helped to make up the sum of that great petition. For I was later told that the need of men to supply the losses of war made the recruiting officers and pressmen none too particular, so the men would but subscribe to their attestations. And who shall say our prayers were not acceptable with the rest, since it was the one God, after all, whose aid we each implored?

There was no dawn on the 11th September; or, at least, none saw the sun rise. The day came to us very slowly through a thick fog that quite screened the French from our sight, and left the latest increases they had made to their fortifications during the night a matter of conjecture to our generals.

In setting down a short account of this great battle I cannot pretend that I saw everything I shall describe: or even understood the meaning of all that went on before my eyes. And I hasten to tell you at once that I was but seldom in imminent personal peril, or indeed within musket shot of the enemy at Malplaquet. If my own sentiments during

the day should chance to interest you, I may say that well-nigh the only times that I was in great fear were when I happened to be inactive and had leisure to observe the awful wounds of some of the men who were being borne to the rear. Then it was that my compassion on the poor fellows' sufferings had like to be swallowed up in dread lest my own turn for such hurts might come. For the rest, I hold ordinary courage to be so much an affair of health and sufficient feeding, that I have long been of the opinion Marlborough's care of the bodily needs of his men was not the least of the wisdom he showed in war.

The mist drew off very gradually, for there was little or no wind to blow it to one side or the other: and it was not till betwixt seven and eight of the clock that the two armies saw each other and the cannon of each side began their duel.

If you would see the battlefield of Malplaquet from the place where I was when the cannon began to thunder, you should figure to yourselves a stretch of undulating ground, pretty open, and about two miles wide. It was bounded on either side by forest which on our left was four or five and on our right but two or three miles in depth. There were no villages in sight, for neither Malplaquet behind the French right nor Campe du Hamlet in rear of their left was to be seen from this spot. In the midst of this stretch of ground was a small coppice of slight growth and on the right, as we faced it, were divers small streams and watercourses (in part hid by folds in the ground) that had their sources in wet land and quagmires.

Clean across the gap, at its further extremity from

us, and leaving the marshes and the coppice on our side of it, the French had made a line of intrenchments of various designs two and even threefold in places. And these were such prodigious obstacles to progress that their own cavalry were fairly imprisoned behind them, and could take no part in the battle save when the allies succeeded in surmounting them. Well within the fringe of the forest on our right which, I have said, was shallower than that on the other side, there were great earthworks that were so constructed as to flank the long line of trenches across the gap.

Such was, in brief, the appalling task which the allies set themselves to perform that morning. And when we bear in mind that the number of men behind these fortifications was as near equal as makes no matter to that of those who purposed to turn them out, we perceive the magnitude of the disadvantage that lay heavily on the side of the brave assailants. From near every part of this line, but more particularly from the flanks, the French cannon belched at us dense balls of smoke that were white in the sunshine which was now striving to pierce the haze.

The plan of our generals was to feign an attack with their left on the French right (where the forest was deepest); but to push home an assault on the hostile left front and flank. And the cannon was not firing many minutes before the Prince of Savoy bid farewell to my lord duke to take command of the Austrians and the whole of the right attack.

I was standing by, talking to Porch, as the two

generals were having some last words: and when the prince and his staff rid away, the eye of the duke lighted on me. His face was pale and careworn, like the day before: and it was clear he had not shaken off the fever. But my amazement was great as he gave me a look of recognition: and I thought he must needs have mistaken me for some other when he beckoned me to him.

"I hear from Mr. St. John," said he, when I got close to him, "that you are a young man of singular discretion: and that you have a perfect knowledge of the French. Is that so?"

"I am as apt, sir, at the French as at the English," said I, in some confusion. "But as for my discretion ——"

"It is well," says he. "We will take that for granted. You can tell Maitland I wish you to ride within hail of me this morning; for I may have need of you. Stay: I'll tell him myself," and he called Major Maitland to his side.

I did not hear what he said to this officer, since I fell back myself as he came up. But the duke presently trotted off to some higher ground whence he could overlook the advance of the centre and left columns of attack at one and the same time, and as I followed, Maitland came back to me. "Corporal John has seemingly found the letter he mislaid from St. John," says he. "He tells me I am not to lose touch of you all morning, as he may want your services later. You are making a good beginning, my friend, seeing you are not yet five days with the army. I suppose you have no conjecture what it is he wants of you?"

"Not I: I have no notion," said I.

"If you'll follow my counsel, then," says he, "you'll not mention his late speech to any: for he told me that, if he had to send you on a job, 'twould be a long one: and he needed no inquiries made after you, as he would know where you were gone. That savours of a pretty mystery, does it not?"

The absorbing play that was going on before my eyes, as the attacking columns moved slowly up the valley, soon claimed the most of my attention to the exclusion of wonder at these words of Major Maitland and the purpose for which my lord duke might need such humble duty as I could perform. But still I had time to reflect that it could scarce be a military purpose, when he had so many officers about him from whom to choose.

There were now being thrust into this forest gap, and into the fringe of wood on our right, four columns which, counting from the left, were Dutch, English, Prussian and Austrian. A small force that had been spared from the troops watching Mons moved on the right of the Austrians: and General Withers, with a body of five English and fourteen foreign battalions, had been sent, before the mist cleared, to plunge into the forest far away on our right and make for a hamlet named La Folie, near half a league behind the French left.

The Dutch on our extreme left were to make the feint against the French right: and next to them came the red-coated English who, like the Dutch, were not to join in the opening attack. They were designed to support the Prussians who, with the Austrians, were to begin the fight by assaulting the

left-front of the enemy and the great earthworks in the forest fringe that flanked the main line of the intrenchments.

At a pre-arranged signal from the cannon, the intrepid soldiers of these kindred nations threw themselves into the forest fringe and against the faces of the trenches therein. They were twice repulsed, though nothing dismayed at the loss of near a fourth of their fighting line. They went at it again and, aided by three English battalions detached by my lord duke to prolong the line to the left, they carried the works with a roar of victory.

The French fled from these intrenchments into the depths of the forest where they turned to bay and fought desperately behind the trees. And as the forest grew denser, so the strife became more disconnected, until it took the form of savage duels betwixt detached groups on both sides.

But while this confusion was going on, a terrible disaster had befallen the infantry of Holland and their Scottish highlanders in Dutch pay. The Prince of Orange, their commander, getting news of the repulses suffered by the troops on his right, became impatient and forgot his orders. He had been posted on our left to make a feint and threaten the French right: but, in his eagerness to be at the enemy, he made haste to deliver a bloody attack compared with which the fighting we had witnessed was but a skirmish. Nothing could exceed his reckless courage nor that of his troops. But he lost near the whole of his staff and seven thousand men. And he wrought no good to the allies save only that he prevented French troops on the right from being

sent to help Villars on the left, when his intrenchments were captured by the Prussians, Austrians and English. The allies were now, and for long enough after this calamity, in very bad case, when there happened two events that tipped the balance over, once for all, in their favour. These were the arrival of General Withers and his mixed force in the forest beyond the French left; and the capture by the English, and two Hanoverian battalions, of the main line of intrenchments whose defenders had been much weakened by moving many of them to support the stricken groups struggling in the forest.

• I did not see the English attack. But I could hear their cheers from where I was watching the deployment of Withers, before whose fresh troops nothing could stand. Naught could stem the tide of victory here; not even the Irish brigade of Villars who hurled them into the forest what time he himself was shot in the leg. The brave marshal refused to quit the field before he fainted from loss of blood: when Marshal Boufflers took his place.

The rest of this awful fight was a somewhat confused tale of cavalry encounters that were not all in favour of the allies. But their infantry never after yielded a foot of what they had so hardly gained. The Duke of Marlborough put himself at the head of the English and Prussian cavalry and the Prince Eugéne, wounded though he was when Villars got his hurt, led the Imperial horse of Austria. And if they whose pleasure it was to decry these generals, and tell us they prolonged the war for their own ends, could have seen the determined manner in which they hazarded their persons, they would have

had the lie given to their malicious fables. For what would it profit them if, in prolonging the war, they lost the lives which they were so willing to cast away. I myself saw the duke unhorsed by the French Maison du Roi cavalry: and in fact, the battle came to its end by a charge of Prince Eugéne with the Imperial horse to cover Marlborough's discomfiture.

I should tell you the Chevalier de St. George was said to have made this charge with the Maison du Roi: and maybe he did, for I believe it cannot be gainsaid he carried himself in a proper and pretty spirit that day. But it is a pity that the zeal of his partisans must needs make his valour ridiculous in the sight of many Englishmen, by putting him at the head of well-nigh every charge of horse which took place at Malplaquet: beside having it that he performed amazing feats with the infantry and saved the French from a worse beating than they got!

The French were beaten; but at what a cost! They began their retreat to Bavay before three of the clock. And not a soul pursued them; since, apart from the difficulty of telling friends from foes among the trees of the forest, every man in the allied army had had enough of such a deluge of blood, as Mr. St. John later called this battle. Moreover, the two generals now knew that they could not reach Paris this autumn after so great a loss in men. Their scheme, be it remembered, had really come to naught two days before: wrecked by the Dutch deputies. And if it should be asked: "Why, then, did they fight the battle of Malplaquet?" I think the answer is

plain. Having advanced to the forest gap in pursuance of their plan to smite their foe in the open, they could scarce turn back (after they were hindered) and resume the siege of Mons with one hundred thousand men behind them. The French lost twelve thousand men and the allies not far short of the double of that number. Though the battle was ended, our toil was not. For, hungry and weary as they, and we who followed them, were, the two generals rid from end to end of the field and in and out of all the bits of forest where had been obstinate fighting.

At length we reached the English headquarters that was now a camp; so quickly had the heavy baggage been brought up after the fighting ceased. The duke, who was already parted from the Prince Eugéne, threw himself from his horse before his tent and dismissed his staff. I was turning with the rest to leave him when Major Maitland bid me stay behind, until the others were out of sight: then, "I will take your horse," said he, "if you will follow the chief into his tent."

I stood for a few moments before the door of the tent till the general beckoned me within. He was set on the edge of his camp bed. His forehead and chin were blackened with the smoke of powder: and the dust that lay thick on the rest of his face was lined with the track marks of sweat which looked to be the wrinkles of a very old man; and there was no doubt but he was weary and ill. The handsome, youthful figure I had admired five days gone was doubled up with care and fatigue as he pointed to a letter that lay on the bed

beside him. "I had hardly durst hope to be in a position to send that earlier in the day," says he; "but 'twas writ, you see, ready to my hand if the occasion should have come. 'Tis not come even yet; but it shall go, and there's an end on it. Take it up."

I picked up the letter from the bed and turned it over. There was no writing on the outside. It was sealed in the customary manner at the back, but in place of a name on the front was a large red seal, which I supposed to be that of my lord duke.

"And where, sir, am I to take it?" said I.

"To the Pretender," says he, with an effort to smile. "The letter must be delivered into the hands of his Royal—into the hands of the Chevalier de St. George by you and you alone: and you are not to return without it."

"Not without an answer to it?" said I.

"Not without that self-same letter," said the duke, very slow.

"But how shall I make sure of its return to me, sir, once it has left my hands?" said I, in a wonder.

"Within is writ a request," said he, "that it be returned to you as soon as read. A request that can scarce be refused. There must be no copy made of it: and you must get it back at once. 'Tis all writ on one piece of paper: and you may know that it has not been tampered with, that another has not been substituted for it, by this seal on the front, which will not be broken in the opening of it. Look well at the seal that you may know it again. 'Tis not to be supposed, however, that you could secure a meeting with the prince if you had but this letter

(which is to be given to none other than he) to introduce you to him. So here is a letter craving an audience for you": and he drew from his breast another letter, which was directed to the Chevalier by the title he had assumed in France. "This second letter," he went on, "contains only the words, 'The Duke of Marlborough presents his duty to the Chevalier de St. George and would beg the favour of an audience of his Highness for Mr. Charles Repton, who assures the duke he has matter of moment to impart,' and I have not signed it."

I liked not the job. There was the same smell of mystery and subterfuge about it as seemed to pervade all the dealings, so far as my small privity went, of the subjects of Queen Anne with her half-brother. But I perceived, on the instant, what an occasion this might prove to me in my quest of Oliver Selby. If I was to have a private audience of the prince, what was to hinder me, when I should have got the letter back, from begging his powerful aid to have the boy restored to his parents without further bloodshed? So I took the second letter from the duke and asked him when I should set off.

"There is no need to go till a couple of hours after daybreak," says he. "They are retiring to Bavay; but he will want some rest before he is disturbed again. Methinks he quitted himself like a prince this afternoon and he is fatigued belike: and I am not too sure you will find him at Bavay. You will be directed to the prince's lodging when you enquire of him at Marshal Bouffler's headquarters. Maitland will furnish you with a trumpet, who will

have orders to carry food for you for one day, as well as a flag of truce: so you run into no danger, and you will be courteously received by the French. I have chosen you for this mission in reliance on Mr. St. John's advices and by reason of your not as yet holding a commission, which might be jeoparded; but it is a high confidence I put in you, Mr. Repton, that may only be justified when you return with my letter. No less than my good name may hang on your discretion: and, bear in mind, this is a matter that is secret from all. Maitland knows only that you go to the French lines to see Marshal Boufflers: naught more. And none else is to know more."

"I will answer for the safety of the letter, sir," said I. "None else shall have it but the man you name while I am alive. But may I ask if I am free to mention to the prince a matter of my own concerns when I shall have ended your grace's commission?"

"To be sure: to be sure," says he: and then went on, "Why, do you know the prince well?"

"I have been presented to him once," said I.

"Why, and that is very well," said the duke; "you go on your own private affairs if anything untoward should happen, which God forbid. Do not forget that—all on your own affairs. Au revoir, young man, and remember, too, that I have trusted you."

CHAPTER XIII

JAMES III LACKING THE GRACE OF GOD

SOON after eight of the clock on the 12th September, I set off with my trumpet, who was a soldier of the Scots Regiment of White Horses, to ride the three leagues that lay betwixt our camp and Bavay. When we were mounted I asked the soldier what his orders were: and he replied at once that he was to escort me to French headquarters on the affairs of the commander-in-chief, and thence on my own private concerns whithersoever I should direct. So, thinks I, that is the way the great man guards his secret! The visit to the Chevalier was to be my own affair and nothing more was left to the honour of the trumpet than that he should not disclose my private schemes!

I could write pages on the awful sights that met me on the way to Bavay: though, to be sure, they were no worse than what was to be seen on our side of the battle-field; not so bad, indeed, since we had near the double of their dead and wounded. But I shall spare you now a particular account of them.

I found the Duke of Marlborough was in the right when he had told me I should meet with courtesy from the French: and I had small trouble in discovering the quarters of the Chevalier in a little castle that lay beyond Bavay, a mile or so on the road to Valenciennes. The castle had been put at his service by the owner who was an officer in the French Army.

I rid into the courtyard soon after noon and gave the second letter I had received from the duke to a serving man that showed me into a chamber in the front of the house: and presently I was joined by a Colonel Sheldon whom I remembered to have seen at St. Germain, though I had never speech with him before. He was tall and very handsome with the manners of a pretty gentleman: and, of course, he did not know me, or affected not to do so. He informed me the prince was not yet risen, though the letter I bore had been sent in to him: and, "I fear, however," says he, "that his Majesty will be unable to attend to it this morning, as he is suffering from the wound he got yesterday in his arm. Is it needful for you to tarry for an answer? I have given orders for the entertainment of your trumpet, and if you will take some refreshment you might leave word where you would have an answer to the letter sent: and perhaps we need not detain you."

I was anxious not do or say aught that might jeopard either the duke's mission or my own suit which I was likewise minded to press. But to call this young man, whose head had not at any rate borne the weight of a crown, "his Majesty" was somewhat more than I could just bring myself: so, "I am grieved to hear, sir, that his Royal Highness should have met with a hurt yesterday," said I.

"Oh, 'tis nothing very serious," said he; "but his life is too precious for us to take any hazards, and he must be kept quiet for the moment."

"I thank you for your offer of refreshment," said I; "but I have lately taken food."

"Then have some wine," says he. "I could do

with a flask myself just now, and I make no doubt you will pledge me in the King's health; God bless him."

I excused myself, saying I had much to do: and, "What no?" says he, "then I must drink alone. The very mention of yesterday gives me a thirst." He rang a hand bell that lay on the chimney and brought a serving man who took his orders. While the fellow was away he went on: "Faith, it was warm work: you were there of course? My word, but I thought the French would have had it their way till quite the end: and perhaps you'll think it strange; but it makes some amends, to my mind; it takes some of the sting out of the defeat, to know that the English foot did the business after all."

"But I beg leave to doubt, sir, that it was the English foot who did the business," said I. "Where all fought like heroes it would seem to me in the nature of a theft to claim all the credit of the victory for our men. They did uncommon well; but had they been pushed against those trenches in the beginning, before the same were half void of men, there is no saying but they would have met with a like fortune to the others."

The colonel looked at me for a moment with some amazement in his face before: "Well: well: perhaps you are in the right of it," said he. "But there is no doubt that, as the affair turned out, there was no more going back after our—the English infantry went forward. And fine fellows they are too. I hear the King's name was on all their lips last night, eh?"

"I mayn't say I observed it," said I; "for I was

much occupied till I went to sleep. But your news must travel quick, sir, if ——"

"Oh! We—the French have spies everywhere," says he, in what I took to be some confusion. "You cannot do without 'em, as your Corporal John knows." The man now brought the wine and some glasses and Colonel Sheldon went on: "Well then, since you won't, here's to his Majesty!" And he tossed off a glass and then a second. He rattled on quickly about nothing in particular as though the wine had loosed his tongue. But I was glad to observe that he was careful not to question me on my concerns nor on the particulars of my mission: a piece of good taste which I set down, in part, to his supposing that his curiosity would be satisfied by his master, after I should be gone. And it is to be remembered that he knew, by the presence of the trumpet, whence I came. At length: "I hardly think it can be needful for you to wait further," said he, "if you will tell me where I am to send the King's answer to the letter."

I knew not what sort of reply to make to this; since I was aware that the only proper answer to the letter would be to bring me back to the house if I quitted it, and I was silent for a space to take thought. Then it came to me that if I was to have an audience at all, this colonel would surely be privy to the fact: so, "You think it doubtful that his Royal Highness will see me?" said I.

"See you!" he well-nigh screamed. "And what should he see you for? No: I do not think that is at all doubtful. I make quite sure he will not see you this morning: for ——"

At this moment one of the doors of the chamber opened somewhat abruptly, and James Francis Edward Stuart, Chevalier de St. George, proclaimed Pretender by his sister who set a price on his head, entered.

I think I have already described his appearance as I saw him a year and a half before. There was no change, save what time had wrought to clothe him with a little more flesh, though he was still very lean: and his left arm was in a silk, kerchief sling. Colonel Sheldon and I both made obeisance which he acknowledged with a stately bow: and then, after looking hard at the colonel and the wine on the table with what I took to be displeasure, he approached me with his hand extended.

"How do you, Mr. Repton," said he. "You desire to see me alone?" I took the hand he graciously offered, and "Yes, Sire," said I.

He turned again to Colonel Sheldon and said nothing, though he looked with meaning at the door. The other never moved a foot until the Chevalier raised his arm to point, when he advanced a pace towards the door and: "You will pardon me, your Majesty," said he; "but this is most unusual: and if I am to be answerable to God for your ——"

"It is our wish, Sheldon," said the prince; and after staring at one another in dead silence for what seemed to me long enough, the colonel slowly quitted the room.

"You have something important for me from the duke, is it not?" said the prince to me when the man was gone. He seated himself at a table whereon was a silver writing tray with pens and ink: and he waved me towards another chair. But I chose to stand; I

had that to say anon which were better said standing, I thought, than sitting. I drew from my breast the sealed letter and laid it on the table in front of him. He took and opened it without betraying any astonishment at its strange appearance and was soon deeply immersed in its eager perusal; the while my heart thumped as I watched, with a jealous eye, the two doors on the one side of the chamber, lest haply someone might burst in and strive to seize my treasure.

He must have read it twice or thrice before he spoke and drew my gaze off the doors to look at his face which seemed to discover no displeasure. His words, though he spoke aloud, were scarce addressed to me at first, as: "He makes a singular request," says he: "and I can't call to mind that I ever heard the like before. Still we must remember he runs into a prodigious danger in having aught to do with us. He hath a host of enemies already, if all I hear is true: and we cannot expect that he will take more risks than are needful. No: I see no cause to resent his manner of communication."

"I have it on my mind to warn you, Sire, that I know nothing of the contents of this letter," said I.

"Is that so?" said he, in some surprise. "But yet you are already in possession of near the half of his grace's secret, which lies in the fact that he would entertain a correspondence with me."

"If you will permit me, I had rather rest in ignorance of what is said in the letter," said I.

"As you will," says he. "I had thought to give you a verbal answer to the duke and write him later at more length when I shall have leisure: and his

letter evidently contemplates such. Did he say aught to you of the answer?"

"No: Sire, he did not speak of an answer: and perhaps I am at fault not to have got information on that point," said I. "He gave me to suppose that my duty was but to take his own letter back. But if I may make so bold, and if the answer will be short, could not your Royal Highness write it in the margin and seal the letter again before you return it to me?"

"Yes: I see no reason why that may not be done," said the prince. "And you may tell the duke we consider well of the proposal and will write him fuller anon."

He took up one of the pens before him and writ with a firm hand, and quickly, in the wide margin of the letter: and, when he had read it all through once more, he folded it with care precisely as it was before he opened it. But here there was some delay, since there was no wax in the writing tray. I had need to ring the hand bell for a servant to bring both wax and taper: and it was Colonel Sheldon who came first to the door to answer the summons.

The prince, however, waved him away: and at length the letter was sealed with a ring he had on his finger, and I had the packet safe again in my bosom. He spoke of yesterday's fight, expressed his great sorrow at the losses of his brave countrymen and, "You were with the Duke of Marlborough: did he see me, think you?" says he.

"Yes: Sire, he must needs have seen you," said I: "for he spoke to me of your deeds."

"And what said he then?" cried the young man eagerly.

"He told me he thought you had quitted yourself like a prince, in the afternoon," said I.

"Ha! said he so?" says he, with a look of extreme pleasure. "That is at least well: and belike it is one reason why he writes me so soon after the battle?"

I found it no part of my duty to my chief to inform the young man that the letter was writ before the battle was begun; so I was silent. Whatsoever might be the upshot of this correspondence, it was clear to me that no harm could issue from it to the prince and his cause: and I hope I may be forgiven my deception.

He next made as if he would rise and put a period to the audience, and now the time was come, I thought, to unburden myself of that which always lay next my heart.

"If your Royal Highness will pardon the intrusion of my own concerns and those of my friends into this meeting," said I, "I would crave a few moments of your time to ask for your help."

"Why, what is this?" said he. "I thought our business was concluded. Methinks Colonel Sheldon would be in the right to call this unusual."

"Sire, I had his grace's permission," said I, "to press my suit to your favourable consideration; though 'tis true he knows naught of its matter."

The Chevalier set himself down in his chair again: and his face that was late lighted with a youthful pleasure resumed its grave expression. "Mr. Repton," said he: "you are not unknown to me; but, as a trusted servant or friend of the Duke of Marlborough, I chose to greet you like an honourable

ambassador, as you have seen. But when you ask my patronage of your private affairs, I should remind you that you have forfeited your claim to it."

This was a crushing blow; but I was not going to yield at the first repulse. No; yesterday's fighting had at least taught me better than that. "And may I ask your Royal Highness," said I, "in what manner I have forfeited my right to beg your mercy, for it is no less, as I might beg the mercy of any other prince to right a cruel wrong? Do not dismiss me without a hearing, since it is no purely selfish boon I ask."

"Let me see," said the prince: "the counts are many and grave. You were found unfit for the priesthood in the Company of Jesus, by reason of rebellion. When they sought to give you other honourable employment, you brought shame on the order by tavern brawling, in which you were near slain for your sins. Then in England, where you were sent to save a persecuted family from apostasy: instead of encouraging the members to steadfastness, you neglected your sacred charge and the education of the boy committed to your care for an intrigue with one, or both, of the frivolous, fox-hunting daughters of your host, till it was needful to remove the youth from harm's way."

For all my great need of self-control, this was more than I could bear. "'Tis false, Sire," I cried: "false from beginning to end; and if you can believe that man's fables, then indeed you leave me without hope in your mercy and kindness."

"The sin of apostasy," he went on, as though I had not interrupted him, "is the deadly sin of all;

the sin that was punished of old time by death. And yet you could make light on it."

"I never made light on it," said I; "but I held that every man should be let worship God in his own way. And, though I would extremely urge any that should seek my counsel not to lightly cast away the comforts of our Holy Church, I would go no further to thwart their designs for conscience' sake. And if they act against conviction, then is their adhesion to any faith indifferent to me."

"You speak like one of these free-thinkers that are said to be doing so much evil, Mr. Repton," said the prince.

"I am no free-thinker, with submission," said I: "unless it be free-thinking to let others think as they will for conscience' sake. Idolatry, too, was punished by the prophets of old time, as you say, by death; but idolatry is the sin of ignorance, and you can no more cure ignorance by massacre than you can cure apostasy, for conscience' sake, by threats of hell or persecution."

The prince was silent when I ceased speaking, and who knows what his thoughts may have been? "But I wander, Sire, from my humble petition," I went on. "I will dispute no more the falsehoods they have tried to make you believe; save telling you that one of them can be disproved, with your permission, in twelve hours from now. Since it was for helping to defend Colonel Porch from assassination in Tresham's club that I was near slain, and in no tavern brawl. Your Royal Highness must sure remember Colonel Porch?"

"I remember him well," said he. "He is an honourable gentleman."

"Well, Sire, he now rides in the staff of the Prince Eugéne: and there is no manner of doubt he would come over to see you and give the lie to this charge."

"Is it possible?" says he. "You seem to be earnest enough, too. But stay! That is not all; the death of Tracey was by your hand. He was one of the elect: and his kinsfolk have been true to us in exile to their own great loss. He was ill to be spared."

"Yes, Sire, I was guilty of that," said I: "and oh, but I have felt the remorse of it o' nights in bed. But if it was to do over again, I must needs shoot the man. He was there to take my life for striving to save my charge from kidnapping. What else was he there for: consorting with gipsies on another man's land, and conspiring with a villain from hell to steal that man's only son and carry him away into exile? You speak of exile yourself, Sire. Oh! do you not taste the bitterness of it, even while you fight (like King David) on the side of the enemies of your country? Your father, too, before you, knew the aching anguish of it through long years of patience; but they did not rob him of his only son. He had you to comfort him: he had you to live and hope for: and he had you to soothe his dying hours. Can you then not feel compassion on this poor bereaved father whose only son they have snatched away he knows not whither? And why? That the boy may grow up to despise the man that gave him life, by reason of his being a man of little faith. At least, the English Government did not steal you away from your father to bring you up in the Protestant faith,

that he once professed, and to teach you to contemn his apostasy."

"Stop; stop! I can bear this no longer," said the prince, as he covered his face with a handkerchief to hide his emotion.

"Nay: but you should hear me out now, Sire," said I. "If you will do the thing I ask; if you will but see to it that this act of common justice is done to this injured family, I will give my life to your service. I never thought to mix myself in your affairs; though, so long as they told me the Queen was in favour of your succeeding her, I saw no harm in bearing your letters and packets in Paris and associating with those that made your cause their own. I had no zeal for it myself; they taught me no politics at St. Omer, and my property was said to be at stake. For I have land in England: and my guardian tells me I shall be rich when my nonage is over. 'Tis all yours, Sire, save what will suffice for the simple wants of my life. And I will pray for you, toil for you, aye, and fight for you, should the need arise and my sword be worth your acceptance, if you will make them restore the boy to his people."

I kneeled on the floor by his side, well-nigh exhausted by my passion, and he placed his hand on my shoulder. The hand shook with such a tremor that there was no need for me to look in his face, which was now uncovered, to read his agitation. But I did so, and I then perceived, for the first time, the strange dark beauty that clothed it when emotion chased away its habitual melancholy. As I rose to my feet he said:

"Hush: listen to me. You are indeed generous

whatsoever they may say against you: and I will not be outdone in generosity. If I may accept your offer in honour, I will. But there are difficulties; you scarce know the sum of what you ask. I know not myself where the lad is: but this matter goes deeper than you think for; it is known in Rome and has made no small stir there, if I am rightly informed."

"'Tis because it must needs be known by now in Rome that I importune your aid," said I.

"But that is not yet all," says he. "His Holiness is said to be praying the King of France to secure the boy's person under a guard."

"Oh!" said I, with a scorn I could not conceal, as I remembered what Goldbetter and St. John had said: "The King of France is to be made a tool for the boy's French inheritance, is he? He does not know, possibly, that if the lad becomes a proselyte the Church would have none of the property, while he could have it all for himself to spend on his wars. Or do they purpose to divide the spoils betwixt them? Then, Sire, here is your opportunity. I am only a young man like yourself, and there are not many months that separate our ages; but God in His wisdom hath disposed this audience, and He gives me bold speech to point it out to you. The King of France will do your bidding if you claim this lad for his parents: and I would make it my business that all London and much of England should know he gained his liberty through you. Thanks to Mr. St. John, I am not without friends in London, many of whom, I doubt not, would hail with joy this occasion to proclaim your toleration and clemency. 'Twould do your cause more good than many plots

and plans of invasion. Shake off the yoke of the Jesuits, Sire, once for all, even as I guess you are shaking off another yoke in dealing direct with the Duke of Marlborough in this matter." And I tapped my bosom to indicate the letter.

"But you are yourself a Jesuit?" says he.

"I was, Sire; but from this day I cease to be one," said I. "My dearest and best friend on earth is a Jesuit: and I owe the company more than I can ever repay for their unselfish training and their pure and wholesome teaching; but there I seem to have exhausted the good that is to be got from them. I may be wrong; God grant I am and help me never to wish or do them ill. But methinks I must have tasted of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; for the end of it is that I will no longer be a member of the society. I will have no more to do with those who, good though I know them to be, persist in making use of agents whose wicked actions they seem unable to control."

The prince was still in some agitation. He was silent for a few moments, and I made sure that my words were not without a little weight with him; but, "I think you let your sentiments carry you too far, Mr. Repton," said he. "I make due allowance for them, and I respect your grief. I can likewise say that I will believe no more ill of you from this day: and my design is to make further enquiry into Tresham's accusations. Of his great zeal there is no doubt. But his temper is, haply, sometimes the master of his discretion: and, though I have no actual control over his actions, since he is not in my personal service, I will be on my guard with him. But when

you speak of yokes, I must tell you that I acknowledge none and I feel none."

"Pardon me, Sire, if I am lacking in respectful words," said I; "for I have not been taught the ways of Court. But I seemed to see the yoke, though doubtless it is made easy for you, a prince, to bear. I perceived some minutes back that you have the wish to put this matter right; that your true heart bleeds for this poor father. Well, anything that should hinder the scope of your charity must be in the nature of a yoke."

He rose from his seat and, taking my hand, said: "I will give this matter my most earnest thought: and, if it shall lie in my power and not athwart my conscience, I will have restitution made. You desire that the boy may be handed over to you in the first place, I suppose. Well, then, not to be behind you in generosity, I postpone your offer to serve me until such time as you shall receive him by my orders into your own care."

He indicated the door with a gesture of considerable dignity, and I retired in an agitation that was, I believe, no less than that which the prince had betrayed a short time before.

We were not gone a mile on our return journey to camp when the trumpet's horse fell dead lame: and, though we both dismounted to examine the beast, we failed to discover the cause of it, save that he would seem to have got some hurt in the stifle joint. This was quite an unforeseen hindrance to the speedy conclusion of my mission: and I chafed with impatient disappointment until I bethought me of begging the loan of a nag from Marshal Bouffler's headquarters.

I had no notion of what was the custom of war in like cases, as the military phrase is ; but there seemed no other way, short of walking back to camp. This was not to be thought of, since it was long past noon (nearer four than three of the clock), and we were still on the wrong side of Bavay with some ten miles to travel. We were warned not to ride after sunset with a trumpet, lest we might be molested by unfriendly acts done under covert of darkness. There was no place of safety where I could leave the man ; and it was clear we could neither separate nor travel at night without acting contrary to orders. We got a horse at last ; but not without much delay in seeking the proper French officer to undertake the responsibility of the loan ; and the time was not far from sunset when we set off at a round trot.

About three miles out of Bavay the road we had rid in the morning is joined by another : the two making a very narrow fork as they unite and form one road into the town. When we reached this fork on the backward journey, the trumpeter said he thought the road to our right would be the shorter one to headquarters, and would avoid a part of the battle-field ; so we followed it and forsook that which we had pursued in the morning. Both roads led towards Malplaquet : and, since they could be nowhere more than three-quarters of a mile apart, it was no great matter which we took.

We had not followed the new road very far before we heard in front of us a noise of shouting and, the instant after, I perceived a dominican friar in the midst of the way, just where a by-road from the left joined the one we were on, and would seem to come

from the road we used in the morning. The man ceased shouting as we got nearer; but he held up his arms as who should bid us stop. I told the trumpet to pull up, and when we were got into a walk the friar made the sign of the cross on his breast, the which I acknowledged by making another on my own. The man's cowl was drawn down over his face, which it concealed: and he was not at the pains to remove it when he addressed me in the French.

"For the love of the Holy Mother, kind sir," says he, "will you not stay and help a wounded soldier? I have a man near dead that has lain behind that wall unattended by a surgeon for twenty-four hours. I have given him food and some cognac; but I can find none to help me carry him to yonder houses, where I may get him bed and shelter."

"How came he to be wounded so far from the battle-field, and why were you shouting but now?" said I.

"I called for help till I saw you coming," said he. "The man is a horse soldier, my son, and he got his hurts on the battle-field; but he tells me he fell from his horse hard by that wall: fainted from loss of blood, and his comrades never missed him by reason of their haste. If I could place him on one of your horses 'twould take but five minutes to get him under shelter: and for the blessed Virgin's sake you won't deny me that aid. Nay: I lay this burden on you, my son, in her name."

A few hundred paces back along the road we were come was a cluster of small cottages that looked to be deserted, for all the signs of life there were about. And some little way down the side road (but not

quite close to it) was the mud wall surrounding a plum orchard, the trees of which still bore leaf and concealed the road beyond, where it took a bend to the south. It would not take long to carry the wounded man from the one place to the other, I conjectured; but it was odd that none should have answered the call of the friar for help, if he had been bellowing there for any great space of time.

Now, whether it was, as I told the Chevalier a while back, that I must have eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, or whether it was that the gigantic struggle of armed men I had witnessed at Malplaquet had opened my eyes to the hard needs of daily life and self-preservation, I know not. How it was I first came to learn that if men are to live in peace in the world outside a religious seminary they must cease to blindly follow their noses in merely doing what they hold to be right, without a thought to the hazards of molestation that beset them, I cannot say. But I was somehow now become a man, and I comprehended that God helps those who help themselves, and that He expects us to have a care to preserve from needless dangers the lives He has given us.

I was now as wide awake to danger as the friar before us, though I did not tell him so: and I had no mind to let him call me coward for refusing to obey this summons of the Church. Since the converse with the man had been in the French, I rightly supposed the trumpet understood nothing of it: so, "You shall have my horse, father," said I, "if you'll tarry awhile till this soldier tightens the girth." I bid the trumpet dismount, beckoned him to come

up on the near side and, when he had drawn his horse after him till it stood betwixt mine and the friar, I leaped from the saddle. As we stood thus screened from the other man's view, I plucked the letter from my bosom, thrust it into the trumpet's hands and whispered: "Go slow at first, and then ride as hard as you can for the duke's tent and give that to his servant: do you understand?"

There was still light enough to see the soldier's broad honest face flush under his tanned skin as he whispered back, "Be I to leave your honour? Sure I cannot do that, sir, without ——"

"Obey your orders," said I, still in a whisper. "You were told to guide me in my private concerns. This is my private concern; I run no risk so near the lines. But you do, till that letter gets to the duke. I'll be into camp soon after you."

The man took a pull at the girth and we both remounted.

"Now, father," said I, "I am ready for you; but since it grows late, this soldier may as well return to camp as tarry here for me. Lead the way."

The friar could not have overheard our whispered words; but he hesitated as he saw the trumpet ride on down the road, while I waited behind.

"Nay," says he: "but the man might help us too: and 'twould save you time to have him with us. Call him back!" he added in a sharp tone that ill-suited his dress, as the trumpet now put his horse to a trot.

"Too late, father," said I: "better let him get back to his supper now: and show me the wounded man."

He led the way down the side road till he came abreast of the first wall of the orchard, when he

quitted the road to walk slantwise towards the far top corner. He bid me dismount as the ground was rough; but I told him I should be as well on the animal, and, "'Tis strange, too, that you have seen no horse-patrols of the French pass this way," said I.

"One came while I was trying for help at yonder houses," says he; "but they turned down this road before I could make them hear: and they saw not the wounded man who is beyond the far wall."

I heard the clatter of approaching horses behind the orchard trees that screened the bend of the road, and presently saw four mounted men swing round the corner in front. They swept off the road, near as soon as I saw them, and made straight for us. But, before I had time to draw my sword, my left leg was seized from behind by a man that must have leaped the orchard wall: and I was tipped out of the saddle on to the ground like a sack of oats from a pannier. In a second I had the friar sitting on my chest, while the other bound my legs, and a moment later the horsemen were dismounted and around me, and my arms were tight held.

I was clean out-witted, and yet I had been on my guard.

CHAPTER XIV

WITH THE PRINCE EUGÉNE

SOON after dawn of the following day I was standing again in the tent of the Duke of Marlborough, giving him a particular account of my mission, while he questioned me on the events of the night before.

"And who do you say this mock friar was?" says he.

"He is one Tresham," said I, "who follows the Chevalier about in peace and war, though I have it from the lips of the prince himself that the man is not in his personal service."

"I have heard of him," said the duke: "a truculent Jacobite by all accounts. They were watching the two roads evidently; but the most of the men were on the other road: and the friar was to shout the alarm and make a delay if you used the road he was watching. Yes: I see that; but you were too wise for him and I am exceeding grateful to you. You have no manner of doubt it was the letter they wanted?"

"None whatever, sir," said I. "If you had seen their rage when they stripped me and found no letter, you would have been convinced. Tresham cursed me and struck me such a buffet on the side of the face as I shall feel the smart of for some days. I marvel now that they did not kill me, out of hand, before the French patrol came up and they fled."

"Nay, they could scarce do that," says he, "unless they were minded to fly the country altogether, which would ill suit their schemes of keeping a network of popery round the Chevalier, I doubt. If they had caught you both, they must needs have slain you both; there was no other way to keep the secret of the violation of the safe-conduct, and the affair would have been set down to marauders by the marshal, had I made complaint. But once you put the trumpeter in safety, your own life was safe from the cut-throats; for I must have made a pretty stir with Monsieur de Boufflers at losing an officer under safe-conduct. And they could not say it was the work of marauders, with the trumpet alive to give them the lie and swear he left you, at your own request, with a friar. Marauders do not wear the habit of Dominicans. But now you are safe back, methinks I had best say naught to Boufflers, who would reply that you separated from your safe-conduct."

"I claimed the safe-conduct of the trumpet when they were binding me," said I. "But that villain Tresham only girded at me and said, 'Trumpet, trumpet: I see none. Perhaps the brave trumpet is returned to camp!' Still, the girding was on my side when they failed to find the letter; and I did not spare them neither. I made sure they were going to kill me; so I told them I rejoiced to die after having served the devil such a pretty turn."

"You did well to get the loan of a horse from the French," said the duke: "and it shall be returned this morning. They must have lamed the trumpet's

horse at the château to delay you; so these knaves are pretty close round the Chevalier, it seems, even if they be not in his personal service. I hardly think Colonel Sheldon would lend himself to such a trick; but faith, one never knows, and I suppose he was much put out. It would be a poor return for my release of him, the day he was taken prisoner. But I have done with the job," he went on, with a rising scorn. "I will not lend my name to further the schemes of these priests; and if the lad cannot shake himself free of them, I wash my hands of him. I will be no party to bringing back the tribe of arrogant Jesuits that wrecked his father's fortune, and made it impossible for a Protestant to continue to serve him. In their pride they would have all or nothing; and they shall have nothing, for me. Unless that boy will give them their congé, I will have no more of this traffic. How could that fellow have the audacity to assume the garb of a friar unless——? Stay: why did you tarry with him at all, since you suspected him from the beginning?"

"I, sir?" said I; "why, by reason that he made me the sign of the cross and called upon me to help in the name of the blessed Virgin. What else could I do?"

"Fore gad, I scarce know," says he. "You're not a Catholic: and I think I'd have seen the man damned first."

"But, indeed, sir, I am a Catholic," said I: "and I was even a Jesuit, too, I do think, till yesterday, when I disowned the order in the presence of the Chevalier, and gave him counsel to shake off their yoke himself."

The duke still lay in his bed during this talk: and at that, I thought he drew the coverlet over his face to hide his contempt. But I was in the wrong; it was done, I conjecture now, to conceal his disappointment.

"You, a Papist?" says he. "Lord, what was Henry St. John about that he did not let me know? Perhaps that is why he supposed you would be useful to me as an ambassador to the prince! And a Jesuit, too! 'Tis the queerest tale I've heard this campaign. You a Jesuit?"

"I was, sir," said I; "at least I was educated at St. Omer for the priesthood and ——"

"Yes, and the very oddest cuckoo's egg that ever they found in their nest, I dare swear," said he. "You were too big for them, Mr. Repton; too large and too straight to fit in with the others in the nest. I protest, sir, this has given me a disappointment that I could well have saved myself withal; though 'tis no fault of yours. But it seems," he added, with some bitterness, "that I must needs be always hindered now from befriending those who serve me best. I had designed to give you a commission and would have writ by to-morrow's post to have your name in an early gazette, though I had not chosen the regiment. But this news puts an end to that. 'Tis more than ordinary vexing; but you know, of course, that the rule against Catholics holding commissions is near as strict as the law of the Medes and Persians: and I would not insult you by hinting that you might abjure."

"I am deeply beholden to you, sir, for your thought to reward my humble services," said I; "but, indeed,

I am not jealous for a commission. If the truth must be told, I gave my service free on the hazard of finding an occasion thereby to forward a private scheme of my own."

"I hardly take you," says he. "For cold-blooded, midnight courage, your sending the trumpet away with my letter yestereven and tarrying alone to face the odds, would be hard to match. Men do not work like that, by custom, who have no hope of military reward. St. John writ me word he was sending me a young man that was desirous of learning the art of war under me or one of my lieutenants. I have his letter somewhere; but 'tis no matter; I remember the contents. The young man was one of those rare persons of his age that keep their own counsel and can neither be bribed, coaxed nor threatened into swerving an inch from what they hold to be their duty. And he was not particular as to his appointment, so he might have freedom to visit one of the fortresses, I can't call to mind which, on private affairs whose nature he would impart if I desired. There was somewhat else about the Chevalier; but ——"

"Was not Douay the fortress he named, sir?" said I.

"That's it," says he; "but I have had other matters on hand, as you may guess, that gave me small leisure to enquire into the private affairs of a volunteer."

"'Twould take too long, I fear, to tell them to you now," said I.

"That depends on the length of the tale," says the duke. "But look you here,"—and he sprang from

his bed like a young man. "Set you down on that bed and tell me so much of your story as will fill the time that I need to dress."

With such a kind encouragement, I had been a churl not to embrace this occasion to get counsel, if nothing more, touching the quest I was on that seemed to grow more difficult the nearer I got to Oliver Selby. And I told him so much of my story as would give him a clear insight of my perplexity without intruding on his benevolence.

"You tell your tale frankly," said he, when I had made an end: "and I have got it well in my mind. But you have the making of a fine soldier in you, and it were a great pity to lose your services."

"With your permission, sir, I purpose not to leave you," said I, "until I know whether the Chevalier is able and willing to secure the release of Oliver Selby. And then if he ——"

"As to that, I would not be too sanguine," says he. "He is an amiable young man and, no doubt, you wrought on his feelings till he supposed himself strong enough to withstand intolerance. But see what took place within a few hours of your talk—by men, too, who profess to serve him! They would have killed you and your safe-conduct without a qualm to get at their master's secrets. I won't discourage you, however: and if he should get the boy released, it will be an earnest of his qualities to rule after the death of his sister."

He paused a few moments and then: "But I think I have now a better way for you," says he: "and one that may supply the deficiency of the Chevalier, should he fail you; though to explain my plan is

to give you share in a State secret that must needs be kept to yourself."

"I can keep any secret, sir, that will help me in my search," said I.

"Well, it so falls out that if you disclose this one, you will defeat your ends," said he. "But 'tis this. To-morrow we march to Mons to resume the siege and that, I think, will end this campaign that has been ruined by the obstinacy of ignorance—no matter how. Boufflers will let the place fall; he durst not interfere now: and then we go into winter quarters. But next spring, if we get not peace, which I pray for, albeit I know it won't come, it is probable (I make no promises) that I shall lay siege to Douay. Now, if this were noised abroad I doubt your bird would be flown before ever the investment was completed. If Douay falls," he went on, "a man of your wits and courage will get the lad somehow: and, in the meantime, you can await in patience the beneficence of the Chevalier."

I began to thank him; but he held up his hand.

"I am not done yet," said he. "I have told you 'tis a pity not to make a soldier of you. If you will, therefore, I purpose to ask the Prince of Savoy to let you ride in his staff, as a sort of aide-de-camp to Colonel Porch: and if you should please his Highness as you have pleased me, he will surely offer you a commission."

You will now understand, if you have had the diligence to bear me company so far, how I came to be transferred to the staff of the Prince Eugéne and, though I had speech with him often, ceased to be

under the immediate orders of the Duke of Marlborough.

His enemies have added to their many accusations the one that he corresponded with the Pretender during this campaign, as well as the next. There is no doubt but he did: and I am now a witness to the fact; but wherein lies the shame of it, while Queen Anne herself favoured the succession of her brother? It has always seemed to me that he in no way failed in his allegiance to the Queen, so long as he had no design to place the Chevalier on the throne before her death: and none has alleged that.

There is much to be said on both sides of this question, as I have told you before. You must have lived in the time of the Queen to comprehend the whole matter. The Act of Settlement, passed by William III., that was to secure the throne to the House of Brunswick, was not passed without dissension, nor a multitude of votes against it in the House of Commons: and many persons openly held that the Act could not be law until the death of the Queen. If Marlborough sinned in this thing, he was not alone; for near every one of his associates was mixed up in it: and you have seen that I was willing to serve the Pretender, for a price.

The duke was great, despite calumny, and his name will be spoken of with praise when the most of his enemies shall have been forgot. You, his detractors; some of you statesmen, for did not Mr. St. John join your host at last? Some of you soldiers, as witness his Grace of Argyll; and some of you dignitaries of the English Church, save the mark. You began by accusing this great man of usury, peculation and

embezzlement. Well and good; stick to those charges if it is your pleasure, albeit you proved nothing more than that he acted as his predecessors had done; and spent the money of the State on the secret service of the State. But, when you went on to charge him with cowardice and lack of military knowledge, you spoke on a matter of which you knew nothing, of which I should have known nothing, but for the hazard of my quest of Oliver Selby. You will pardon me, therefore, when I say that, since you had no scruple to hurl the second charges which, for all your ignorance, you knew to be false, you may go lacking believers in your first charges for me.

We marched to Mons the next day: and the day after that the siege of the city was continued actively. I shall not give you an account of this siege lest I weary you with military talk: and nothing before the town happened to further my search of Oliver. Colonel Porch was so good as to say he rejoiced to have me with him, and I found the Prince of Savoy the kindest master that any soldier could desire. Of the Chevalier I saw and heard naught, and I believe he returned to St. Germain not long after the battle of Malplaquet.

Mons capitulated on the 9th October, or twenty-five days after it was re-invested. But, about a week before that event, I received a blow that gave me the keenest sorrow I had yet known. The blow was not unforeseen; but I think it was none the less stunning for that: and I mourned the loss of Fr. Cornish as deeply as though I had not known him to be in failing health when I quitted England. He had been to me a second father, the memory of

whose tender love was a thing to treasure for the rest of my life. But if I shall have faithfully recorded his many virtues, you will know the man near as well as I did: and there is no need to dwell on my grief.

The sad news came to me in a letter from Goldbetter who placed within the packet another letter that he held to be the immediate cause of the father's death. Though I think it were nearer the truth to say he was worn out by toil which, he had been led to think, was in God's service. And when he found that he had been working all the time for mere men there was no more to do that he had strength for.

By the same post came also a third letter that gave me not a little amazement; but I shall set down the three letters in the order in which I opened and read them.

I.

"OSWESTRY,

"*24th September*, 1709.

"DEAR SIR,—I received your advice of the 16th instant, and am truly thankful to know that you came through that awful fight safe and sound. The popular clamour in England is now to make an end of this war: and I earnestly pray that those who are striving to that end may prevail. Notwithstanding I shall continue to remit the sums agreed upon per mensem until I shall receive your contrary instruction.

"I deeply deplore that I have now to be the bearer of what I know will be the saddest piece of news you could get. Poor Fr. Cornish breathed his last on the 21st this instant month; and I am but now

returned from his funeral. He passed away peacefully two days after he had received the enclosure I forward herein for your perusal: so that you may have the latest information from the Jesuits touching the abduction in May last past.

"In my opinion they have been the death of one honest man at least. They broke his heart first: and now they have made an end of him; since his crushed spirit could not stand against this last cruel blow. I think it is scarce to be believed but what the General of them all could have got the lad returned if he had used his influence with the Pope; even if the company was not privy to the rapine. I have none of the Italian, as you know; but Fr. Cornish made me a translation of the letter.

"I have been through the father's papers and find everything is in order and no money gone astray, save what your dear father bequeathed to him for the Company of Jesus. All else is properly accounted for. But he has left behind some other papers and notes which tell of events in your infancy: and some, or at least one, of them may be of much interest to you hereafter: wherefore I set it down now: namely, that through some accident or design you were never baptized into the Roman Church.

"I have followed your instruction and filled in the date of your discharge from the Company of Jesus as from the 12th September in this current year; and I have put the document with your other papers.

"Mistress Joan Selby is returned to Bromley Chase, having quitted Mrs. Buxton a month back.

Her father fetched her home and I must suppose he has some shame of his late behaviour; since he called upon me and Fr. Cornish and desired me to convey to you his thanks for the pains you were at to provide a home for his daughter. I understand he was only convinced of his error in misjudging you when he heard you were setting off to Flanders to join the Duke of Marlborough's army in search of Oliver. It would seem he could then no longer doubt that you were even as eager as he to find his son albeit, from what he said, he is as ignorant as before where the lad now lies.

"That you may have success in your endeavours and run into no unneedful dangers is the prayer of your obedient servant,

"GEORGE GOLDBETTER."

II.

Translation of Letter to Fr. Cornish from Secretary to Father-General S. J.

"ROME,

"*5th September*, 1709.

"REVEREND AND DEAR BROTHER,—I am commanded by the Reverend Father-General to advise you that he is rejoiced by yours of the month of June to learn of your good health: and he made full enquiry touching the matter whereof you write and wherein you conceive wrong to have been done in the name of 'Ours.' The informations brought to light have forced him to persuade himself that the gentleman named by you did a great sin if he so acted as to bring the name of the Company of Jesus forward as a cloak of authority for his deed of

abstraction, whereof there is no sufficient testimony to condemn him as yet.

"The company had no knowledge whatsoever of the affair until the same was made known to the Provincial in Paris by the English Catholics in that city, but without the calumny your letter brings information of. Wherefore when your letter came to hand, the Father-General did institute all the examinations needful and bore the issues to his Holiness for his judgment, who, while he denounced the method whereby this thing was done, did nevertheless see no way to cure the ill. For his Majesty tne King of France is now concerned to have the boy educated in the Catholic faith and has prayed his Holiness not to hinder that design.

"Yours wholly in God,

"ONESTES."

Before I pass to the third letter, I may say I was not slow to observe that the information in this letter was at variance with what the Chevalier had told me. It could not be true, at one and the same time, that the King of France had prayed the Pope not to hinder his design to have Oliver educated in the Catholic faith: and that his Holiness was praying the King of France to secure the boy's person under a guard. This confusion of motives for the exile of Oliver gave me small confidence in the power of the Chevalier to get redress. It seemed to give me plainly to know that, amongst them all, the boy would never be released save by force, and that I must now rely on my own wits and the aid of the two generals in the task before me.

III.

"BROMLEY CHASE,

"*22nd September*, 1709.

"DEAR MR. REPTON,—I take up my pen in fear lest by writing I discover my ignorance of the good English you was always so particular for me and Oliver to speak. But I am encouraged to hazard your ridicule by reason of the news I have to give you that I am sure will be welcome. And first I must tell you that none searched the gazettes with more care nor was more rejoiced to find you unwounded than *all* your friends here, after the battle of—I cannot spell the name of it, but 'twas the last and bloodiest.

"We knew you had joined the army in Flanders from Mr. Goldbetter; but have no notion how that will help you in your seeking of Oliver. Now I must say there is come a letter from Oliver. It has no name of place nor date to tell whence it is come: and it bears no mark, save that it is stamped with the mark of the General Post Office: which makes some think it was posted in England and that he is not gone abroad as you supposed. 'Twas but a few lines and he writ that he is well and happy where he is and tho' he loves us naught less than his wont, he is not wishful to come home till his father and mother give up the design to turn Protestant. My father says the poor boy was made write the letter while someone held his hand and that the whole tale is one to put salt on, or some such phrase. But my mother never gives up hope that you will bring back Oliver some day, and I think so too. And I dreamed a dream

the other night that I saw you leading him by the hand in the oak drawing room. And tho' they say dreams do not come true exactly as you dream them, they sometimes turn out very like. Now comes my last news. Joan is back home near a month. My father fetched her from Oswestry and is kind and affectionate to her, so all that part of the trouble is now forgot. He speaks of you kindly now, tho' he sometimes says you are over-much of a scholar and too-unused to the world to find Oliver. But Joan is very brave and never says a complaint.

"There are whiles that she is quite cheerful, but I have found out her secret at last, Mr. Repton, and though I shan't tell it you, I am going to give you two pieces of counsel to end this letter. Mem: (that is what you scholars say is't not?) mem: for the guidance of those who aspire to the holy estate of matrimony. Omit to inform the lady of your choice that you only made up your mind to ask her favour ten minutes before. And do not conceal from her that you had abandoned the design of entering the priesthood before you asked her to be your wife, when well-nigh the last words she heard from your lips were that you contemplated a life of celibacy and chastity. Now please forgive my boldness if you can, and I pray you not to set it down to sauciness unbecoming a proper maiden. I have thought long upon it and the truth is that brothers-in-law like you are not growing on the bushes round Bromley Chase nor anywhere else, and I think it would break my heart if I lost you.

"Your affectionate friend

"EDITH SELBY'

CHAPTER XV

THE SIEGE OF DOUAY

By the 19th April, 1710, the allied armies were assembled at Tournay ready to move: and the following day the generals delivered one of those lightning strokes that made their names such a terror to their enemies.

The French, at this moment commanded by Marshal Montesquiou, perhaps in expectation of peace, had been very late in their preparations to take the field: and the allied generals decided to take full advantage of their delay.

The lines of La Bassée that had played so important a part in the campaign of 1709, were now greatly strengthened, and they were again occupied by the French. But, in place of an army of 100,000 men behind the works, there was not much more than the quarter of that number to defend them. So that the aim of the allies was to pass these lines, before the numbers could be increased, and then lay siege to Douay by surprise.

Douay, which is a strong fortress, lies on the River Scarpe, a tributary of the Scheldt: and the place is connected by canal with all the important towns of the Low Countries. The canal of Douay, as it runs northward towards Lille, may be said to be a continuation of the lines of La Bassée from a bridge called Pont-à-Vendin to the town of Douay: and

once the canal were crossed the lines would be turned. A few miles higher up the canal, towards Douay, is another bridge by name of Courières; and Pont-à-Vendin and Courières were the points selected for the crossing.

Sending detachments on before, and setting out at daybreak on the 20th April, the allied army, divided into two wings (the right under the duke and the left under the prince), swooped down in a long forced march on these two bridges, and crossed the canal of Douay with scarce the loss of a man. The right wing passed at Pont-à-Vendin, the left at Courières, and the same night the wings united in the plains of Lens. The French, entirely confounded, fled in a panic behind the River Scarpe to the south-west of Douay, whence they still hoped to cover Paris. But Paris was not now the goal of the generals: and the next morning, fatigued though all were, the two wings marched on Douay.

The duke moved southward with the right wing; and, while he threatened the French, who again fled precipitately further south behind the Sensett river, he crossed the Scarpe and began the investment of Douay from the south. Thence he despatched a force under General Cadogan to the canal of Marchiennes to isolate the doomed town on the north and east; while Prince Eugéne, with the left wing, completed the investment on the west. Thus by the 22nd April was the city completely cut off from the outer world and from the French army; while, until the place was surrounded, did none within the city know that Douay was the object of attack.

Nay, this bloodless feat of arms was the more

confounding to the enemy (and it is to be supposed to Tresham and his friends) that no man held such a move to be possible. For Marshal Villars had spread it abroad with much diligence, during the winter, that the prodigious loss suffered by the allies at Malplaquet was the equal of a victory to him, and had frustrated all plans for laying siege to cities (like Douay) while there was an undefeated French army in the neighbourhood. But this gasconade had been met by the silence that wisdom enjoined.

As the heavy artillery was yet behind, there was no need to hasten unduly the siege operations; and the lines of circumvallation (or main trenches round the fortress from which the trenches of approach branch out) were not begun until the 28th April. The prince was watching this work on the west side of the town when an officer of the duke's staff, riding up to us, asked for me and, when I came forward, said: "The Duke of Marlborough bids me tell you that your bird is not flown, and he said you would understand his meaning."

"My duty to his grace," said I, with a thankfulness in my heart that I could never put in words; "and I am humbly grateful for his news."

The officer rid away as I turned to Porch who stood by and heard the message. "How could the duke have learned that information?" said I.

"Why, through his spies, of course," said Porch; "but is that not like the man? His head is stuffed full of so many obligations and cares as would weigh most folk down to the very ground. Yet no detail is too small for his mind to grasp and he forgets nothing —not even the name of the street where your quarry

lies. Of course you would go through fire and water and to the uttermost ends of the earth for him now. And no wonder; it is the same with us all. To serve Corporal John well is to learn to feel oneself in his debt. And it would seem, Charles, that you too have served him well."

When the lines of circumvallation were completed the infantry marched into them; and on the 5th May the trenches of approach for the two main attacks were opened. These were both on the west side of the city. One was directed against the gate of Equerchin, under the Prince Anhalt Dessau, with the Prussians: and the other under the Prince of Orange, with the Dutch, aimed at the gate of Ocre, some half-mile to the north of the gate of Equerchin. Covering parties from the divers nationalities took it in turn to guard the works, as they proceeded, and prevent sorties by the garrison.

The difficulty of the investment had been much increased by reason of a detached fort that lay about 2,000 paces to the north of Douay, lower down the Scarpe and called by the name of that river. About midway betwixt Douay and Fort Scarpe and on the road from the gate of Ocre to the fort was the suburb of Dorignie which was destroyed by the garrison with fire and was pillaged on the 6th May. When I perceived the flames and learned the name of the place, I was in great fear lest Oliver might suffer hurt. A little reflection, however, gave me to think that the Rue Dorignie would scarce be in the village of that name; but rather in the town itself, and not unlikely within the gate of Ocre that led to it. And so it proved to be; but we heard the next

morning that some houses belonging to the Society of Jesus had been entirely destroyed, with their contents, in Dorignie.

The garrison of Douay amounted to about 8,000 men and they were under the command of the Marquis Albergotti: a brave officer whose courage and resolution were beyond praise, albeit the two generals were of the opinion that his obstinate defence of the place was in large measure due to his well-nigh daily hope of relief by the French army.

On the 9th May the long delayed heavy cannon and ammunition came up, and now the siege was prosecuted with much vigour, the cannonade being almost incessant. Thus far we had lost hardly any men till the night of the 10th or 11th May, when a sad disaster befell the allies which, though it did not check their valour, was a needless waste of life since one knew that the town must fall in time, unless the French army could drive us from its walls. It was long after midnight, and I was getting some sleep in my tent with Eustace Porch, when I awoke to a noise that came from the trenches in front of the gate of Equerchin and made my flesh creep. It was the noise of desperate, shouting men who were putting to the sword the sleeping toilers of the trenches, mixed with the awful yells of those awakening to find themselves at this dread disadvantage, with no light to tell friends from foes.

About 2,000 of the garrison had made a sally from the gate and slain many of the diggers in their sleep before the covering party came to their aid. We never knew how far they were to blame in not running up sooner; but well they atoned for their

sloth, if sloth it was, when they got to the trench heads. Two regiments of the covering party were those of Sutton and Smith; and when the prince arrived on the scene, albeit we could scarce see anything, we could hear, by the cheers and oaths of the Britons, that they were slowly driving the enemy back within their walls.

There is no braver work that man can do than fight thus in the dark. For the night is a screen, behind which the timidity of the soldier is hidden from all earthly witness save his own conscience and lacks the visible incitements to emulation. We stayed with the troops till dawn, when it was found that these two regiments had lost betwixt them over 250 men killed, besides many wounded. And when the news spread abroad, I think there was none in that great army but would have wished to call himself a Briton this morning. We all helped to carry the wounded to the rear, and later I stood by, near the Prince Eugéne as he watched, in a long silence, the bearing away of body after body of the dead. At last he spoke and: "You English are a strange people," says he to me. "Your army is the smallest of the allied forces; yet there is never a campaign, and seldom a battle, wherein the men fail to perform some unaccustomed deed of cold sacrifice or endurance which is new to all of us, perhaps from the very strangeness of the occasion that calls for it. But how extraordinary soever the occasion, I have never found them wanting. Yet your people despise them: your people, that have no notion how much we admire their stubborn valour, grudge them a small pittance when they return maimed from the war, let

them beg their bread in the streets of your towns, and call them the sweepings from your gaols and the dregs of the population. I tell you, sir, they are not the dregs! I say that if there is any meaning in the words sacrifice, unselfishness and valour, then the larger moiety of them must be the very cream of your manhood, while the remainder keep in step with the others because—well, I scarce know why, unless it be because they are Britons."

"Until the last few months I knew not what patriotism was, your Highness," said I: "and sure few persons in England comprehend what these poor fellows are doing for them. I have many times, of late, thought shame of myself for being here on my own affairs instead of having come to fight for my country."

"Well, you have your duty now plain before you when you return," said he. "Speak for these sheep: work for them: never let slip an occasion to exalt them in the eyes of their countrymen. And tell their countrymen, if you will, from me, that their faults are but those of little children who know no better, while their virtues are of the stuff that makes the great nations of the earth."

"My voice is but a weak one, your Highness," said I: "but I will remember your words if I ever return."

"Do so," said he: "and tell your countrymen, too, when you may, that the more citizens they can train as soldiers and the fewer intriguing politicians they have, the greater will be the number of true and honest men the country will own. As you know, Charles, I was trained like you for the priest-

hood; but the priesthood, alas, too often means politics: and I think I am none the less honest from having taken to the sword."

After this set-back the siege operations proceeded fast until the 20th May, when the French army began to make its presence known about Cambray. It had now been reinforced to the extent that its numbers were not far short of those of the allies; but it was vastly inferior in the matter of food, clothing, and horses. Albeit he was not yet fully recovered from his wound at Malplaquet, the Marshal Villars was again at the head of the French, and he was assisted by the Duke of Berwick and the Marshal Montesquiou. The Chevalier de St. George likewise joined him from St. Germain about this date.

I may tell you at once that naught came of the marching and counter-marching of the French from this time forward for a fortnight or so, save that the siege of Douay was somewhat protracted thereby. For since a wise man will not permit another to threaten him without taking precautions to make his own safety sure, so our generals, to meet the threats of Villars, withdrew a large part of their besieging forces to the south of Douay and threw up two intrenched positions, one on each side of the river Scarpe facing east and west. And, while Eugéne continued the siege, Marlborough posted a strong force betwixt these two lines in such manner that, if Villars really intended to relieve Douay, they could march in to defend either and give him battle.

After much irresolute manœuvring the French at length reached the plains of Lens. And on the

1st June they moved down to reconnoitre the westward of these two positions, which was now held by Marlborough, who, supposing his adversary to be at last in earnest, called Prince Eugéne to him with all the besieging troops that could be spared. For four days the two armies faced one another without firing a shot, when the French drew off in a southerly direction and Prince Eugéne returned to the siege of Douay. Villars made yet another demonstration of hindering the siege, in answer to the signals of distress displayed by the hard-pressed town, on the 16th June. But this time Marlborough awaited him alone in the same intrenchments, and the prince was not again interrupted in his prosecution of the siege. Villars withdrew towards Arras, since he could not bring himself to hazard an engagement.

It was while the armies thus lay close together that the Chevalier de St. George rid constantly in sight of our outposts: and rumour had it (and no doubt rightly) that he met and conversed with divers of our officers at these times. It was likewise said that the Duke of Marlborough re-opened correspondence with him; but this, I am pretty sure, was untrue. I was not in a position to learn this for myself; since, but for the four days in the intrenchments, I was away from the English army at this time with Prince Eugéne before Douay. But I have much reason to suppose that the duke was in earnest when he said he was done with the job, after I was trepanned near Bavay; while, if he had changed his mind, why should he not have employed me again?

There were a few more attempts to make sorties from Douay; but they were easily defeated on each

occasion: and the food now grew so scarce and bad that pestilence was said to be breaking out in certain quarters of the town. On the 22nd June the trenches were opened before Fort Scarpe: and I think all then knew the end was very nigh. For, not only were there orders to be ready for a general assault at any moment; but the attack on this detached fort was not begun until we had succeeded in posting batteries on the very edge of some of the counter-scarps (or walls nearest to us) of the main ditches of the enceinte.

Still, in spite of our watchfulness, there must have been a few bold spies that had egress from the city of nights by swimming and wading through the swamps and inundations caused by letting out the waters of the Scarpe river, where it was not possible to post sentinels close together. Otherwise it is hard to account for what I am now going to tell you.

On the 24th June the Mayor of Douay, having obtained permission from the Marquis Albergotti, sent a drum to the Prince Eugéne and requested passports for seven nuns, who were sick and fearful lest the town should fall by assault, to issue out of the gate of Equerchin that night on their way to Arras. The prince, who supposed that the demand was in the nature of a hint that the garrison was not going to surrender without an assault, made answer that they could go by daylight the following morning; since he permitted none to pass through his lines by night. That same afternoon the Duke of Marlborough rid over to see the prince and learn how the siege progressed.

After they had been some while in my chief's tent,

and as I was talking to some of the duke's staff, a serving man came and bid me go to the prince. When I entered the tent I heard the duke say: "I had a singular request this morning by a drum sent by Monsieur Villars. He asks for passports through my lines for seven religieuses, all of them French, in the name of a friend of the Chevalier de St. George. I know not what the Chevalier may want with seven of them; but it would seem they wish to quit Douay for Arras before the place falls by assault, and I said I would make no objection if your Highness will approve their passing through your lines."

Now, perhaps I should explain here that in order to follow the Arras road from Douay it was needful to pass, not only through the lines of the besieging force commanded by Prince Eugéne, but likewise, through the outposts of the covering army under my lord duke, and hence the courtesies of war demanded the double permission.

"I have had the same request, but from the mayor of the town," said the prince: "and I have already given the safe-conduct. But I refused to let them out to-night. I said it must be done after daybreak to-morrow."

"Yes; but 'tis a strange favour to ask, is't not?" said the duke. "And you will mark that the request comes both from the mayor of the town and from the marshal. Why, if there's one nun in Douay there must be a couple of hundred: and why should these seven only be so sick and fearful of an assault that they design to come out and forsake their toil of tending the wounded? Since I gave the qualified

permission I have considered of the matter, and it has come to me that Repton may throw some light on it." Then, turning to me as I stood at the door of the tent: "You were a long time in Paris," says he: "can you call to mind any friend of the Chevalier who might be concerned to get these dévotes out of the town?"

"I know of none, sir, save Tresham," said I.

"Why, very well: and why not he?" says the duke.

I took his meaning then: and a terrible commotion began to assail me which was begotten of my fear lest, after all my patience, Oliver should slip through the iron grasp I supposed to be laid on his prison. I was in so great an excitement that I could scarce keep from breaking in on the talk and urging that the safe-conduct be withheld. But I had, happily, enough control of my feelings to perceive that my case were best left to the care of this extraordinary man, whom nothing seemed to escape.

"Methinks, your Highness," the duke went on, "that my honour may be somewhat touched in this affair."

"How so?" says the prince.

"Well, nothing now but God's providence can save that town," said the duke, pointing over his shoulder towards Douay. "Villars cannot and won't; in three or four days it is yours, and the soil on which it stands will belong to the allied army. It will be no longer French territory; do you take me? But you know, and so do I, that there is one of her Majesty's subjects detained therein athwart the wish of his parents: and such

a thing is not possible so soon as the place is ours. But how should I fare, I, the guardian of the rights and privileges of the British, if I permitted the lad to be removed without my jurisdiction while there are yet but a few hours left wherein they can accomplish this violation of our law?"

"My dear duke," said the prince, "I see the point clear. But sure this is a very delicate matter to interfere in. I ask you another question in answer to yours. What will his Holiness say to me, a Catholic, if I prevent these nuns from going free on a mere suspicion?"

"They are both hard questions to answer," says the duke; "but I think the sum of them makes up no sufficient reason for doing nothing. Neither would I offend his Holiness if it can be helped. God knows, I have enemies enough without adding to them. Still, these nuns must be examined lest they smuggle Repton's boy out of the place."

"If it must needs that they shall be examined," said the prince: "I would not willingly have it happen in my lines."

"Nor I in mine either," said the duke.

The prince smiled, while he looked at me for a space in friendly fashion: and then, "I think my friend Charles, here, can be trusted to arrange it," said he: "and, since he is a Catholic, there is no fear that he will be harsh to these women. But he must have an escort to prevent treachery or a rescue: and it certainly should not be a Catholic escort; while, if a mistake shall be made, the escort will be acting without my knowledge or sanction."

"I have it now," said the duke. "I will give him

a half-troop of dragoons under a cornet to be on the Arras road without my outposts an hour before daylight. The nuns, howsoever they shall be conveyed, are not to be molested until they are passed, first through your Highness's lines and then through mine. At any time after that, Repton can halt the party while he inquires if his lad is with them. If the boy is not there, no harm has been done: only of course Repton had no authority to make this search! That is quite understood, your Highness. But if he shall be found with the women, they can make no complaint at having to suffer inconvenience: since they must be brought back to camp to answer for that they have unlawfully detained an English boy."

Long before daylight on the 25th June, I was on horseback as near to the gate of Equerchin as the trenches would permit me, without using the road itself which I desired to avoid. Moreover, it was only by placing myself on one side of the road or the other that I could actually see the gate which was screened from cannon shot by a heavy earth traverse. The only change in the plan, made the evening before by the prince and the duke, was that I should be allowed to watch the party issue from the gate, lest haply the nuns might change their road. And Colonel Porch who, so soon as he heard of the venture, would not be denied a share in it, lay with the horse party that was under one Cornet Smart, and was posted in a hollow about half a mile to the north of the Arras road, and a few furlongs beyond the outposts of the covering army.

The gate of Equerchin opened not directly on the

main Arras road which had a gate of its own into Douay. But, since that road was inundated by the Scarpe river for the space of over half a mile from the town, the Equerchin road which joins that of Arras by a cross-road (near where the outposts of my lord duke began) had been chosen by the Mayor of Douay for the nuns.

The day broke warm and clear. And as the reveillé rang out from all the camps (some a little later than the others) and was taken up and echoed by the drums and trumpets of the garrison of the beleaguered city, like the challenges and answers of some gigantic fowl-yards, my spirits rose to that healthy level which will hearken to no whisperings of ill-boding. And I greeted the morning in hope and gratitude. The cannon on both sides opened fire as by custom, though feebly from the side of the town: insomuch that, after a while, I could not but think the exodus might have been put off, after all. But, before half an hour was passed, the roll of many drums together was heard from the quarter behind the gate I watched. The thunder of the cannon grew less and less and died away at last in one rumbling discharge: and the gate of Equerchin slowly opened.

There issued from it a trumpeter followed by two ruinous, mothy, old coaches, or French post-chaises, whereto were yoked some thin half-starved nags that could hardly draw them. And this slow and solemn procession must have raised a smile from many a soldier in the trenches who had seen naught to amuse him for weeks.

As they approached I drew further away from the

road, on the north side of it, in order to escape notice. Yet I was not so far but that I hoped to get a glimpse through the coach windows, as they came abreast of where I was. But the window curtains were tight drawn: and I had need to smother my impatience when I followed the procession, at the distance of about a hundred and fifty paces, still to the north of the road. I had nothing to fear if they should turn to the left at the cross-road that would take them into the Arras road: and this they did without a pause. As they turned again to follow the Arras road, they came within the outposts of the Duke of Marlborough which were here furnished from English troops: and since that road was lined on each side with trees which were now in full leaf, I held it safe to approach nearer to the party without risk of attracting too much mark.

I now began to think that maybe my lord duke had been over-suspicious after all; for the wretched condition of the horses gave no promise of a betterment in the pace of the cavalcade which, at the present rate of movement, had like to be far short of Arras by nightfall. As I cautiously followed their progress behind the trees of the road, it came to me with conviction that these could be only innocent women following their own occasions, selfish though the same might be. But whatsoever should happen, I conjectured that we could easily overtake them, when it was our pleasure to do so, long before they could reach the French outposts which were many miles down the Arras road. I could not, of course, see Colonel Porch and the cavalry, since they were well away on my right; but I knew they could not

now be far out of hail and could be warned by me, in a few moments, if they should be needed.

At length the procession reached the last piquet which was posted on the Arras road: and my excitement was all but died out when, through a gap in the trees, I perceived the trumpet turn about, salute the coaches and ride slowly back towards Douay.

The nuns were now on French ground proper, and I put my horse into a trot to join the road and overtake them; uncertain whether to stop the coaches at once and have done with my enquiries, or wait till Eustace Porch should see them from his hiding place and come forward to relieve me of what I now thought to be a useless task. I had no longer hope of finding Oliver with these women. But, as I got close to the road and ascended some rising ground, I saw, about four hundred paces in front of me and on the same side of the road, a group of six or seven horsemen who seemed to hold an equal number of led horses. They had been well concealed until I mounted the high ground: and they were even yet partly hidden by the trees on the roadside.

My first conjecture was that Porch, becoming impatient, had advanced close up to the road with a portion of his horsemen; but a second look convinced me that this could be no group of English cavalry. And I turned my horse again into the country and rid to give the alarm to the half troop which, according to arrangement, should be about half a mile from this part of the road. I had not galloped far when I perceived them approaching the road. They had evidently seen the threatened danger at the same time as I did, and responded to

it like soldiers, with Porch at their head. I now turned back towards the road, without checking my horse, to see, among the trees, that the coachmen had got their miserable animals into a trot and were by this time quite close to the group of horsemen who had hurried to meet them. I sent my beast along as hard as he could go; but I was still four or five hundred paces away from the coaches when they stopped and, like lightning it seemed, discharged their black burden on the road. Six nuns swung into the saddles of the led-horses, while the seventh, who was quite small, was helped on to horseback; and the whole party was clattering down the road to Arras and the French outposts in far less time than it takes me to set this on paper.

But Porch had not been idle either: and before I had ridden half a mile along the road in pursuit, he and the half-troop of dragoons cut in on the road from the country but a few yards behind me. On we all swept; but Porch and I were better mounted than the troopers and, to my discontent, his beast was swifter than mine; so that he soon came even with and then drew ahead of me. The horsemen in front were unequally mounted likewise, and before long they began to straggle; while we were gaining on the whole of them. We could see that the foremost rider had the little nun alongside of him, her horse's bridle in his bridle hand: and now and then he urged her beast with his drawn sword.

How long soever it may please God to spare me, time, I think, will never wipe the freshness of the picture of that wild ride in the hot June sun from my memory. The mad exultation of a chase on

horseback that hardened my iron determination to conquer at all costs: and the sweet emotion of a deep gratitude which came to me with the knowledge that my chance was come at last, can never be forgot.

The leading man (whom I soon knew for Tresham) at length perceived that, though he was distancing his fellows, he was drawing nearer to his pursuers. So he checked his horse for an instant and yelled some orders to the men behind him. Those nearest to him pulled up; and, as the stragglers joined them, the whole formed up across the road facing us, while Tresham raced on with the little nun. Cornet Smart steadied the pace of his half-troop to get them well together before charging, and Porch quitted the road to avoid the enemy entirely. I turned off, too, to follow him, when he shouted behind him: "My horse is the faster; do you keep with the troop while I stop that hound. The quarrel is mine as much as yours, Charles; nay, man: do not spoil the chase by jealous riding."

The appeal was enough for me: and, moreover, I knew now that if we should keep cool, the end could not be far off; at any rate, it must come long before Tresham could reach the French outposts and safety. So I swung my horse back on to the road and, before I had time to think, I had crashed through the party drawn up to oppose us, not half a second before Cornet Smart and his half-troop had swept near every man from his saddle and borne not a few of the horses to the ground as well.

Tresham's devoted band were apt, no doubt, at sword play and assassination; but they must have

been sadly ignorant of war to hope to stop a charge of English dragoons at the halt. They had done far better to have dismounted and used their pistols. I tarried but a second to beg Smart take them all prisoners and slay as few as possible: and then, on I went as hard as before. A slight bend in the road hindered my sight for a space. But when I had followed the others into the straight, I perceived that Porch must be abreast of the fugitives; since he drew his sword and, closing to Tresham's off side, he stood up in his stirrups and dealt him a stroke on the face. 'Twas but the flat of the blade, as I suspected, though it sufficed to stay the man who released the nun's horse and turned on his pursuer. The little nun came slowly back towards me.

As in the case of his followers who, but a few moments before, had shown their little knowledge of military methods: so now Tresham's cunning and skill in small sword play was of no avail against a soldier trained all his life to fight on horseback, and armed with a broad sword that he could handle like a toy. I pulled up to watch the end, for which I knew full well I was not wanted: and this was what I saw.

Tresham's motions were as quick as those of a cat. Almost before their blades met, he attacked with a couple of rapid disengagements under the wrist that were parried by the parade of circle. He then tried a feint in doubling and actually got in a straight thrust, which, perhaps, owing to a swerve of his horse, only grazed his opponent's eye. Porch seemed to be staggered by the wound, so slow did his movements look when compared with the other's agility.

But a second or two after, Tresham dropped his bridle in a flash, to draw a pistol from his holster: and then I saw that Porch had been but playing with him all the time. He was round like a hawk on the wretched man's near side; his sword glittered like lightning in the sweeping cut two, that he knew so well how to deliver, and the blade wrought down and across Tresham's head from the temple to near his mouth.

I saw no more, for the little nun was close to me. He was thin and pale; but there was a great joy in his face as I leaped from my horse, lifted him tenderly from the saddle and, down on the dusty road we kneeled together—Oliver Selby and I—in thanks to Almighty God.

CHAPTER XVI

EXCOMMUNICATION

A HISTORY that is unduly long-drawn-out is a weariness to him who writes, and a sad infliction on those who have to read it: and I had thought to bring mine to an end with the account of how we got Oliver Selby back. But it has been pointed out to me that I have yet to answer some of the charges brought against me by my detractors; and chief amongst those on which I have not heretofore touched lies the accusation of apostasy. But those of you who shall not be interested in this particular matter, and in a few others whereof I have been asked to give information, can lay the narrative aside at this place; whilst they who would hear the whole matter to an end must grant me yet a little more indulgence.

I have said that when the trenches were opened before Fort Scarpe on the 22nd June we all knew that the siege was near at an end. And, accordingly, we were not astonished when, on the morning after our pursuit of the nuns (namely, on the 26th June), this detached fort surrendered. Almost immediately after its fall came the news that the Marquis Albergotti had signified his desire to meet the Prince Eugène and discuss with him the terms of capitulation for the whole town of Douay.

There is not time to tell you of all the strange

duties it fell to my lot to perform before the garrison was allowed to march out of the city to Arras with their arms and all the honours of war, in recognition of their brave defence of the place. But one of the most remarkable and, I think, beautiful sights of my life was on the afternoon of the 26th June, when it was known for certain that there would be no more fighting before Douay. Then there were to be seen in every camp of the allied army soldiers with great sacks on their shoulders, collecting all the food that their comrades could spare from their own scanty rations, to be carried into the stricken town and distributed in the relief of want and suffering. And many a Dutch, English, Austrian and Prussian soldier went short of a meal that day to swell the bulk of this sweet charity.

Lest I might forget to set it down elsewhere, it is, perhaps, fitting I should tell you here that, when Cornet Smart refused to let his men receive a reward from me for what was, in truth, work on my private concerns, I called upon the commandant of the regiment in his own lines and begged for permission to make a gift of two guineas to each man of the half-troop. The colonel said he had no objection, and got the men paraded for the purpose. But, when he told them what the gift was for, they one and all refused to take a penny: and some of them said they would do the like every day to save an Englishman from such bondage. I thought on what the Prince Eugène had told me a while back, and I repeated his words to myself, as I rejoice to give them to you and the world: "The larger moiety of these men must be the cream of your manhood."

Tresham never spoke again; and we sent a couple of troopers to fetch back the post-chaises to convey him and the other killed and wounded into camp. Cornet Smart had eight prisoners when we got back to him: the rest of Tresham's band being killed or disabled. And, albeit they had caused some hurt to troop-horses by fighting for a space on foot before they surrendered, we had but one man badly wounded by a pistol-shot and other few scratched. The wound in Colonel Porch's eye gave him much discomfort: and we bound a handkerchief over it to keep it from sun and wind before we rid back to camp.

The prisoners denied with one accord that they had aught to do with the French army: and, since they were not soldiers according to their own showing, they were marched to camp afoot like ordinary malefactors, each tied to the stirrup of a dragoon. Though threatened with the scourge, they all refused to give an account of themselves, or their leader, when they were brought before the Provost Marshal in the English lines: and they were therefore remanded for further enquiry and consideration of their doings.

The duke then sent a trumpet to Monsieur de Villars bearing a letter that was conceived in a quaint humour and expressed in sarcastical vein his grace's amazement that the marshal should have been a party to such a scurvy trick. My lord duke would not spare him, nor let slip a like occasion to banter the gasconading French general: and he writ that he must now suppose himself to have been in error when he had always believed the root of the valour

of the French army lay in a jealous honour that could not stoop to falsehood and treachery. He went on to say that he had not heard there was recorded in the history of that army an act so base as the smuggling of an unlawfully captured Englishman out of a fortress about to fall into the hands of his own countrymen, under covert of a safe-conduct, obtained by falsehood, for some religieuses that were not nuns at all. Whereat, we heard, Marshal Villars was so exceeding wroth that he had an audience of the Chevalier, and told the prince frankly he could return to St. Germain so soon as it suited his convenience, if he could not rest by the French army without bringing shame on its honour.

The upshot of the affair was that both the marshal and the Chevalier sent letters of apology and denunciation of the scandalous deception that had been practised in their names on the allied generals. The Chevalier at the same time declared (what I believe to be true) that he was entirely ignorant of the boy's hiding place: and that he had given Tresham no authority to use his name when that gentleman had besought Marshal Villars to get the safe-conduct for the nuns. Monsieur Albergotti was likewise instant in his denials that he knew aught of the matter, beyond favouring the petition of the Mayor of Douay who said that he too had been deceived: though it is to be marked that he later undertook the funeral of Tresham.

All this traffic gave us no little amusement in the short leisure we had during the arrangements for the evacuation of the town. But it had an issue that was unexpected: inasmuch as the temper of Villars

was so greatly roused that he had diligent enquiry made into the antecedents of Tresham: and more especially, we thought, after the duke had writ again to inform him of how I had been trepanned near Bavay. The result of his enquiries was to set forth that Tresham was the nephew of the renowned Duke of Tyrconnel who had much to do with the Jesuits, some twenty years before, and whose name was somewhat infamous in Ireland. It would seem that Tresham had imitated the religious zeal of his uncle without sharing all the dissolute qualities of that duke. And those who knew the nephew best formed the opinion that the man was a maniac, determined to uphold by all means, lawful and unlawful, the supremacy of the Pope and of the Father-General of the Jesuits.

But it is not to be supposed that he acted without authority, or at least countenance in his nefarious designs. Or may I put the matter in another way and say that if these high persons gave him none, at least they failed to use their great power to right the wrong he did in their names? They omitted to make a proper enquiry into his actions: and, since they accepted his perversion of truth as fact, without further proof than his bare word, they can scarce blame those who believed his statements that he was their agent.

The Duke of Marlborough, in the end, had the eight prisoners marched to the French headquarters and handed over to Marshal Villars, with a request that he would deal with their cases as he might see fit in defence of the honour of the French army. It was afterwards noised abroad that the marshal

designed to hang the lot, as marauders, when he first received them. But when they claimed to be Britons who had merely done what they held to be best for a lad of their own country, he had them scourged and released.

You will certainly desire to know how we got Oliver Selby home to his family: and the matter was not at first so easy as it seemed; since I feared to be lacking in gratitude to my master, Prince Eugéne, and likewise to the great duke if I asked for leave, out of hand, to carry the lad to England. There was, in fact, no great need for haste. The boy was in poor health for travel, not by reason of ill-treatment, but from the unavoidable privations of the siege: and Porch and I, whose tent he slept in, took great delight in feeding him up with such good things as we could lay hands on. But Porch's eye continued to grow worse, with an obstinate inflammation that refused to be allayed, until at last the army surgeons thought well to counsel the prince to send him to London. Accordingly, about ten days after the fall of Douay, his Highness sent for us both and to Porch he said: "My dear Eustace, the surgeons tell me you must get back to London for the salvation of your eye. But," says he, "I cannot part from both my English attaché and his aide-de-camp likewise; so if you go, you must leave me Charles Repton in your place. I have asked my lord duke, who makes no objection and is pleased that I am content with Charles."

"If Eustace is to go," said I, "I know none else to whom I would so soon entrust the care of Oliver Selby. He can carry him to London:

and thence send for the lad's father to fetch him home."

And so the matter was arranged. I had no misgiving in my mind; since I knew that Oliver would be safer with Eustace Porch than with me. And two days later I watched them set out together on horseback for Ostend (now a safe port for embarkation); the colonel with a large patch over his eye and Oliver as ruddy as a fortnight's good feeding could make him. The plan was that Porch should consult Sir William Reid, the Queen's oculist, who, though he was alleged by some to be a charlatan, had nevertheless been the means of divers notable cures of diseases of the eye: and that Oliver should tarry with him in London until the colonel himself could carry him to Bromley Chase. After their departure I saw even more of the Prince Eugéne than formerly. It was his pleasure to have me in constant attendance on him: and this intimacy served but to increase my admiration of his talents and his many virtues.

The allied generals now sought once more to bring the French to an engagement in order to open the road to Paris: and accordingly, so soon as the affairs of Douay were settled (and the citizens began to go about their occasions much as though the town had not changed masters), the army marched towards Arras. But again it was not to be. For the French, albeit they now outnumbered the allies, withdrew in haste behind the Sensett river; and there they threw up a line of intrenchments that stretched the most of the way betwixt Cambray and Arras, from which it was not possible to eject them

without a loss of life that would have entirely prevented a further advance on Paris. Just as the losses at Malplaquet had hindered a like project the year before.

These new intrenchments covered Arras on the south and east: so that an investment of that city could not be undertaken until the French were driven from them. And, since nothing would tempt Villars to forsake them, the badger was again left in his earth, while the allied army retraced its steps and, towards the middle of July, laid siege to Bethune. The place held out till the 28th August, when it was surrendered by the garrison to escape the terrors of an assault that it was purposed to deliver the following day.

Some three weeks before the fall of Bethune there was made known to me, through his Highness the Prince of Savoy, that cruel decision of the Pope which caused me unutterable grief at the time; but it was, I now think, designed by God's will to put an end, once for all, to the strife that had lasted so long betwixt me and my spiritual superiors.

The Chaplain-General of the Austrian army was a certain Cardinal Wodianer who received one day, enclosed within his monthly packet of letters and documents from Rome, a copy of a papal breve which, so soon as he had read it, he brought to his Highness. I know not what passed betwixt them on this matter; but after the cardinal had quitted him, the prince sent for me and, before he handed me the document to read, embraced me and bid me be assured that the contents of it should make no difference whatsoever in his relations with me.

The breve set forth that, from the date of its subscription by his Holiness, I, Charles Repton, described as of the Company of Jesus, and some time serving with the army of the allies before Douay, was thenceforward and forever excluded from the fellowship of the Church of Christ. It was, in fact, a special breve of excommunication that cut me off from all the offices, rites, sacraments, and comforts of the Catholic Church of Rome: and I should permit you to deceive yourselves if I omitted to tell you that the blow fell heavily upon me when it came.

In spite of my almost immediate perception that the breve must needs have been issued under a false information concerning the part I played in pursuing nuns on the high road: and that such a grave step should never have been taken before the fullest examination of all the occasions, the shame of my public denunciation weighed me down below supposition. And it seemed as though I could never raise my head again.

It is not to be expected that you could comprehend the full measure of my grief; none could do that, I conjecture, save those who had had my upbringing. And, after all these years, I marvel myself sometimes why I was so much cast down; seeing I was ready to act in like manner again should the occasion arise.

You have seen that I had striven to get Oliver restored to his parents by peaceful methods in my petition to the Chevalier: and I was so much in earnest that, if excommunication was to be the lowest price to pay for his release, I would cheerfully have paid it. Nevertheless (such was the discipline I had been taught), it was not till much later that I

learned to feel resentment against the foolish haste which had contrived such a hard punishment. Uncircumspect it was, likewise, since, if one considered of it, the punishment gave the lie to the figment that Tresham had acted without authority and countenance, or that his gang were the unknown adventurers some would have had me to believe. I have often had the thought that the Pope knew nothing of this matter: and that, for the moment, he was the puppet of the Father-General, who could see no wrong in aught that Tresham did.

The Prince Eugéne, of his kindness, made offer to write to the Pope and pray him to have the breve withdrawn until such time as he should have a full and true account of all these doings. But I thanked him and told him that I had rather let matters rest as they were. If the remission came not of free will from the power that meted out the punishment, when there was time for the whole truth to be known, it would profit me nothing. I may say at once that the remission came not at all: and to this day I am ignorant of (nor care to know) the influence that brought about this vindictive award.

Now perhaps I should mention here that, before I heard my sentence of excommunication, I had been possessed of a singular craving, which clamoured for satisfaction, to be back in England again. Mortal man is scarce ever content with the happiness he has got: and so soon as one burning desire is fulfilled he greedily asks for the accomplishment of some other wish until he, and not Providence, shall esteem his cup to be full. It pleasured me to date the birth of this craving from the blessed moment when I

received the little nun in my arms on the Arras road. But if the hard truth is to be made known, I am pretty sure the date must be sought much farther back; as far at least as that of the receipt of Edith Selby's letter, aye, and farther back yet, I doubt.

Still, whether or no, I had determined not to yield to the clamouring of this craving by quitting the field of war at the first convenient season that should come after I had got Oliver Selby back. I was wishful to show my gratitude to the two generals for that great happiness by doing all that was in my power to serve them in what humble capacity soever it might be their pleasure to use me.

But after the breve of excommunication was burst upon me, as the phrase is, the shame of it all wrought a change in the complexion of my sentiments in all these matters. It seemed clear to me that my lord duke had got rid of me by reason of my faith, which prevented him from rewarding the small service I had done him. Of his gratitude he had passed me on to the Prince of Savoy, who had the power to do that which his grace could not. But now the prince was burdened with a volunteer on his staff who was, in a manner of speaking, of no creed at all: and was forbid attendance at the field masses at which his Highness was present. He was as good as his word, and did not permit the matter of the breve to make the smallest change in the constant use he had of my attendance on him. Still, I had now a waxing desire not only to relieve him of my presence for a space, at least, but also to discover, by returning to England, what the upshot would be of breaking the news of the papal breve to the one person whom I

cared for more than myself. So I designed to quit the kind prince so soon as Eustace Porch should rejoin the army.

I had three or four letters from the colonel, and I learned that his sight was completely restored. He gave me a particular account of his sojourn at Bromley Chase, and of the public rejoicing that took place when he handed over Oliver safe and sound at last, after more than a year of exile. He writ that, though the family well-nigh overwhelmed him with gratitude, he could yet perceive he was but standing, for the moment, in the shoes of the man whom they would have really delighted to honour; and the like talk.

A few days after the fall of Bethune (which, I have said, took place on the 28th August), and before the allied army marched on to the investment of Aire, which was the next siege they undertook, Porch returned. I then took leave of the two immortal generals whom to have known, as I did, was an upbringing in itself. I have long since ceased to look for perfection in any man; but it seems to me now that we were permitted to behold a nigh approach to it in this incomparable duality. And if it is man's business to weigh the faults of his fellows, with their merits, let him not forget that, according to human measures, the infinite patience and self-negation which had issue in such feats of arms must have weighed heavier in the balance than the sum of the sins of these two men.

The Prince Eugéne embraced me and did me the honour to say he would write me when I should be in England: a promise that he kept. I had the

great pleasure, too, of being in his company, two years later, when he visited England and gave me a captain's commission in a regiment of hussars.

I was thus free to follow the bent of my inclinations. And I will ask you, in a very short time now, to bear me company once more to the red-brick house faced with freestone, towards the end of the month when the damp earthy smell of leaves in the sunlight of mornings tells you the summer is gone to add itself to eternity. And when the turf yields, a submissive craven, beneath your heel as you tread the pasture land, its spring of resistance dead. What time the trees fear the least breath of rude wind that tears from them the last shreds of golden clothing: and the late fruit in the high-walled gardens must be gathered if the wasps and the early frosts are not to share their sugar ripeness.

But first I must call upon Mr. George Goldbetter, of Oswestry, and learn what he has to say on my affairs. I gave him no warning of my coming; indeed I travelled post-haste all the way from Bethune to Oswestry: and I found him from home when I arrived. But there was no need for ceremony with Goldbetter: or so I thought, though I was in the wrong once more: and, since the serving man said with some meaning in his smile of welcome, that my guardian was not gone far, I bid him take my mails to the guest's bed-chamber, and sat down to await my host's return.

I had not tarried there long before I heard Goldbetter let himself into the house with his own key; but there was another and a softer voice than his. And as I somewhat thoughtlessly walked into

the hall to greet him, I was well-nigh in the arms of Mrs. Buxton before I knew who she was. The murder was not long in coming out. In fact, I more than half suspected the lady insisted, with a meaning look, on the needful explanation: and Goldbetter very shyly informed me that I now beheld his future wife. He had brought her on a visit to inspect the house and appointments in view of an early marriage.

Showing Mrs. Buxton round the house occupied much time. But when we were at last alone over supper, I told the lawyer of the papal breve or, as some have called it, Rome's final thunderbolt and: "The best piece of news I have heard for many a long day, Mr. Charles," says he, in an excitement most unwonted to him that went far towards giving me some offence, at first. He quitted the room in much haste, and shortly returned with some papers of which, I saw, one was an extract from the register of baptisms kept in the church of St. Michael and All Angels at Felton, which he had recently obtained, and which set forth that I had been baptised in that church on the 12th October, 1688. He read from another paper the deposition, left behind by Fr. Cornish, that I had never been baptised in the Church of Rome; and then, seating himself again at the table, he resumed that habit of careful speech with which I was more familiar.

"I am not able to say, Mr. Charles," said he: "but perhaps you know, whether the Pope acknowledges the baptism of the Church of England. If not, he had no power to excommunicate you: and the breve you speak of is but waste parchment in that event.

But whichsoever way it is, there is now no question of abjuration, apostasy, or proselytism. You belong to the Church of England and, since the Pope will have none of you, you cannot join the Church of Rome."

I rid to Bromley Chase next morning, and overtook Lucas Selby a few miles after quitting Shrewsbury. He writ me twice when I was in Flanders: once when he heard we had recaptured his son, and again after Eustace Porch had carried Oliver home: and I knew the man was grateful, as indeed I thought he had need to be. But I was entirely unprepared for the excess of emotion he displayed when he recognised me. He came near to throwing me from my horse in his affectionate demonstrations, and we were almost come to Leebotwood before he ceased to crave my pardon for his former suspicions of me, which I freely forgave him from the first.

We reached the house in time for dinner, at which the whole family was present: and I really think the most notable change in the household was to be observed in Miss Edith who, albeit the flow of her talk and her jests were at times no less than I had been accustomed to, was yet much graver, on occasions, than formerly. And I was not slow to mark that any mention of the war, or of the names of our two great generals, would at once attract her closest attention. This apparent desire on her part for military news awoke in me a watchfulness to be at the bottom of her new-found curiosity; and after a while I discovered that, what jest soever might be on her lips, or smile on her face, the name of Eustace Porch reduced her to instant silence, with a slight

increase to the colour of her pretty cheeks! I shall say no more: for you already know the happy issue of this affair.

Of Joan I had no speech alone for some time: since the rest of the family must needs have answers to their innumerable questions; and Oliver and his grateful mother claimed much of my attention. But, as the day grew older, Edith bid me help her gather some fruit: and when we were come to the orchard we found Joan half-way up a ladder against an apple tree. She had her skirts pinned up: and the blue apron that was about her was, I thought, exceedingly becoming to her: though, for all my long preparation for this meeting, I was now as timid as a little child.

When we had filled a large basket with the golden fruit (and Joan was descended from the ladder), Edith insisted on carrying it alone to the house with an imperiousness that would brook no contradiction; and at long last I found myself in that position for which I had so impatiently yearned. I drew nearer to my love and let my eyes feed on the now ripe glow of her healthy beauty. And I do assure you there was such a contentment in standing thus and breathing in unison, as it were, the same sweet air with her, that I was in no haste to break the spell of that enchantment by speech, and put the satisfaction of my craving to the hazard verdict of a woman's aye or no. If it was to be no: and if that living, breathing person, who now seemed part of me, was not to be my own: then there could be no real life for such as I. But surely it would be aye; it must be aye; it was good for her to make it aye!

At last, "Joan dear," said I; "you know why I am here?"

"Indeed that I do, Mr. Repton," says she. "'Tis to receive the long-delayed thanks of a family that never deserved to have such a friend."

"No, Joan: it is not to receive thanks I am come," I cried. "Your thanks you owe to Eustace Porch and the generals as much as to me. No: I can do without thanks; but indeed I cannot do without that for which I am come to ask." And I drew nearer to her yet until I touched her and my arm was about her waist.

She released herself quickly and turned to face me: took one of my hands in each of her own, and held herself thus at arm's length from me with a strength I had not given her the credit of.

"Charles," said she: "this is all wrong again. Must this folly never cease? No: I will not, I cannot. Do you not perceive that a love, however dear to me, which comes to me through robbing the Holy Mother of what belongs to her alone, must be a sacrilege: and not a love that I dare take: must bring on me, on both of us, a curse in place of a blessing, if I accept it: must ——"

But I would hearken to no more. "You will be robbing none, Joan," said I, in a cowardly fear lest some new obstacle to my happiness might arise in her speech. "Hear me! I am no longer the callow youth whom you rightly rebuffed for his self-complacency of eighteen months ago. I am now a grown man; I have seen the world and I know what I want. Indeed, Joan, I cannot do without you: and I must have that for which I am come to pray, by reason

that I think I know what will make for your happiness too. I love you, Joan dear, truly better than my own life: and have done for long enough now. And if you could put up with me, as I cannot but hope you may, I would wait for your love until I shall have deserved it. Unless—unless you should abhor me for what I am now about to tell you: for what I should have told you at first. You rob none by taking my love: you have robbed none since it was first offered to you. There has been no talk of the priesthood for me since I last saw Fr. Cornish alive: and there can be no priesthood for me now. I am excommunicated, dear!"

She asked me not a single question on this strange matter. She would seem to have given no second thought on my words. That was her trust in me. She but released my hands, and joining her own together, in prayer I thought, she looked upwards and uttered a low cry, as of suffering, that brought me to her side again.

I drew her to me now without repulse and, as I kissed her lips for the first time, "You have always had my love, Charles," said she: "and now I think God must have willed, indeed, that I may keep your own."

THE END.

BRADBURY, AGNEW, & CO. LD, PRINTERS, LONDON AND TONBRIDGE.

00072075

Digitized with financial assistance from
Shri Brihad Bhartiya Samaj
on 20 February, 2020